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CHAPTER I.

LAST LAY-OUT.

THE Moro river is a small stream which rises in the Rocky Mountains, and forms one of the sources of the Rio Canadian. This stream is in New Mexico, and takes its rise in the adamantine range, twenty miles due west from Fort Union. The Government wagon, and mail stage road from Bent's Fort south to Santa Fe and other important stations, leads through the town of Trinidad, Colorado.

The Rocky Mountains, at a little distance north of the source of the Moro, curve westward; their towering sides presenting a most grand and imposing view. Huge rents, serpentine cracks and fissures, tremendous gulches and perpendicular cliffs are outlined upon the azure morning, or golden sunset sky.

At the foot of the range, the grass is rich and rank, the clumps of pines and cacti are luxuriant in growth, and form a dark green fringe to the rocky range, agreeable to the eye of one approaching from the level plain eastward.

At intervals, along the tiny streamlet,

BLANCO BILL FACED THE MADDENED MUSTANG, THAT, STANDING ALMOST STRAIGHT UPON ITS HIND LEGS, CUT THE AIR WITH ELECTRIC-LIKE VELOCITY WITH ITS FORE HOOFS.

that rolls on, increasing in volume to swell the waters of the Canadian, grow gigantic cotton-woods, to guide the far-off prairie-roamers to water and to camp; while, down along the base of the towering wall of a most gigantic gorge, flows the little stream that swells into the Moro, the waters rippling from afar into the heart of the range.

A great winding gulch extends for fully a mile into the heart of the mountains; so abrupt the turnings of which that one would frequently suppose that the end was directly ahead, but, upon advancing would discover that the tremendous rent in the mountains extended yet further. And did one continue to follow it up, he would find that there was no outlet—that the walls met abruptly, and towered as high as the entrance.

But, at some places, a mountain climber might, but with difficulty and no little danger, surmount the walls on either side, although there seemed, as far as eye could determine, quite as difficult climbing up the mountain-sides after the gulch wall was surmounted, as one would be forced to enter before reaching the upper edge of the latter. However, there seemed no object in climbing such rough walls, unless to escape some deadly foe; and oftentimes, indeed, the Apaches had been seen, bivouacked within the ravine, on the bank of the little stream, while monster grizzly bears and ravenous mountain wolves prowled the rough adamantine range, seeking what they might devour.

Having thus described this gigantic gulch, within which transpired some strange and startling events, which occurred in the wild experiences of those whose trails we propose to follow, we will now proceed up the range to a point some ten miles distant, where a new mining town had been but recently "slapped up."

Only a few weeks previous to the time when the attention of the reader is drawn to this particular section of the Rocky Mountains, a small party of prospectors had struck "pay rock," and, having on all previous occasions been disappointed in their "finds," which had turned out worthless, they immediately named their "locate" Last Lay-out.

Spanish monte is the principal game of chance dealt or played in New Mexico; and it can be easily determined by watching and keeping the run of the "paste-boards," when the last pair of cards that can possibly form a "lay-out" upon which money may be wagered, are cast upon the table. Hence the characteristic designation of the town. For all that, at the period of which we write there had been but little grounds for founding hopes of large fortunes being ground out from the rough rocks, by the discoverers, even at points where the outcropping promised a rich percentage of both silver and gold.

This, however, was due to the fact that, as has been mentioned, the prospectors, who had first "struck" and "staked," had not the means to purchase the necessary quartz-mills and furnaces, and to employ the workmen needed to develop the mines. In consequence, they had used every means to spread flattering reports of their "find," both up and down the range; for the purpose of drawing speculators, or agents of mining companies to that point.

Their success in creating an excitement was, as is always the case in the mining regions, most remarkable; a perfect stampede of speculators, gamblers, tradespeople of every description, and bummers and desperadoes of all nationalities, starting at once, after hearing the glowing reports that were being circulated in connection with the new "find."

The first find of silver-bearing quartz, with quite a percentage of the richer metal, had been made at some distance up a gulch, from which branched many smaller ones, the beds of which were found by the experienced "old-timers" to pan out "pay dirt," but which could not be worked, except in places, on account of the scarcity of water. For some time after a rain storm, however, many impecunious miners who had joined the rush found no difficulty in panning out sufficient of the yellow dust to keep them in "grub" and their favorite beverage, "bug-juice."

There was quite a favorable place for the location of a town at the mouth of the gulch, which was grass-grown, with *mottes* of pine scattered picturesquely here and there, and a small stream of clear, cool water winding between the foothills.

A double row of slab shanties, running north and south, parallel with the range, constituted the "town"—there being but about thirty or forty of these primitive-looking buildings. The longest of these, the "Benzine Bazaar," was the only public house of any consequence in the burg.

The establishment was of some sixty feet long by twenty wide, with high peaked roof—the attic being partitioned off into small sleeping rooms, by cotton cloth which was tacked from the rafters to the floor. Small iron bedsteads were the only articles in the way of furniture in any of these apartments.

The bar was to the right of the front entrance, and was finished with a large mirror, besides many showy decanters and Bohemian glasses. The rear portion of the "Bazaar" was used as a

gaming room, there being no partition between it and the bar—the proprietor thus being able to stand at his counter and overlook his entire establishment, with the exception of the small rooms in the attic.

The landlord was known as "Alamo Abe," he being a Texan, an inveterate hater of all "Greasers," and who invariably, when overloaded with his own merchandise, went on the war-path seeking to wipe out a Mexican, in revenge for the many outrages inflicted upon his old fellow-Texans. His favorite war-cry, when on a "jamboree," was "Member ther Alermo!" which fact had been the cause of his having been dubbed "Alamo Abe." Thus far, however, the Mexicans had existed only in his imagination.

Abe was a character in Last Lay-out, he being the leading spirit and acknowledged chief of the burg; probably from the fact that he was quite liberal when a little "off his cabase," from over-indulgence in "tarantula juice," more than from any just claims as a "bad man," or a "frontier terror," or even from his capacity as a leader.

Very vain was Alamo Abe of his popularity and importance, and he would have furnished free whisky to the whole town for a month rather than lose a fraction of the good opinion of the citizens and miners—which opinion, however, was maintained only through the importance born of his evident wealth.

Abe had made a big stake at monte just previous to the locating of Last Lay-out, and joining the rush, had established himself as detailed—he never before having held such a high position, or stood upon the paying side of a bar.

But there had as yet been no opportunity for Alamo Abe to prove that he had the "sand" to back his boasts and domineering words, as the excitement in connection with prospecting in the vicinity had tended to keep the denizens of the new town well occupied up the gulch. But at the time of which we now speak, there was destined to be a reaction, for there were few miners in Last Lay-out who had not "sized" that section of the range, and knew just what might be expected or hoped for with good grounds in the future.

Thus far not a single female had arrived in Last Lay-out, and two Chinamen, who had been discovered heading for the burg had been immediately hanged—the corpses of the Orientals having served as the "starters" for the "stiff-yard," which had been located and dedicated with much ceremony and "bug-juice."

As there was a large representation of the wild men of the West, who continually "hankered" for a shooting-bee or a lynch picnic, but who for the reasons previously mentioned had not got down to "biz," the chances were that the pair of "Heathen Chinee" would not long remain the sole tenants of the "stiff-yard."

Aside from the excitement that always prevails in a newly located mining-town, caused wholly by the insane eagerness of each and every arrival to inspect and "size" the "find," nothing had broken in upon the citizens of Last Lay-out to detract one iota from this all-absorbing inspection which had even kept all the citizens and miners busy with their own personal affairs, thus causing the business of the bars and gaming-rooms to be of no consideration whatever. But the proprietors well knew the cause, and also that the change was near at hand—that soon, all would take to drinking and playing to a greater or less extent, and business in the burg would be flourishing, and exceedingly more profitable than the few mines, which had as yet not been developed sufficiently to indicate their exact "pan-out."

They knew however, that this was rich enough to insure the success of the burg.

Last Lay-out was, however, destined to be the scene of startling events, and the denizens of the town to be more excited than when rushing for the new "find." Even the "old timers" would be forced to acknowledge that times were as lively and interesting there, as in any burg they had ever struck; even in the good old days on the Pacific slope.

And, strange to record, the stirring times, startling events, and tragic occurrences, destined to happen in Last Lay-out, and the gigantic gorge we have described, were fated to be brought about by a handsome and princely looking young man, who, at the opening of our narrative, was speeding up the range from San Miguel; and jointly with him, a beautiful maiden, who was galloping down the range from Raton Pass.

Each was nearly the same distance from Last Lay-out, and both were rapidly advancing toward each other, drawn by the Fates, or some strange and subtle influence of which we know nothing. Both, although never having gazed into each other's eyes, neither of them having any knowledge of the existence of the other, were yet hastening unconsciously to meet; and, upon meeting, to love with a passion that would bind them to each other until death.

CHAPTER II.

THE BUCCARO APOLLO.

The particular evening on which we start our story was destined to be an eventful one.

Last Lay-out was jubilant over its celebration of the arrival of a bull-train, with the first quartz-mill and furnaces, to open the most promising mine which had ever been purchased by a company of speculators, and been named the "Grizzly Gulch Bonanza."

Alamo Abe was in his glory, being forced to employ extra barkeepers in order to attend to the crowd of thirsty and hilarious customers that thronged Benzine Bazaar.

The setting sun was gilding the western side of the serrated peaks of the Rocky Mountains, presenting a most brilliant and gorgeous spectacle, while the eastern base of the range was in comparative gloom, when a single horseman was seen upon the plain east of the Rocky range, his course bent toward the great gorge ten miles south of him. The beast and its rider made up a picture of equestrian beauty and grace, seldom to be seen. Each seemed to have been created for the other.

The horseman was Apollo-like in form and face, the perfection of manly beauty. His costume consisted of buckskin breeches, profusely bedecked with buttons of silver; a richly-embroidered woolen shirt, blue in color, with wide flowing collar turned loosely over a black silk kerchief. This was tied in a square knot, and upon it was pinned a horseshoe of solid gold, the nails being represented by diamonds.

The wide brim of his white felt sombrero was turned up jauntily, just over his right temple, and held to the crown by a pair of miniature gold spurs crossing each other. His top-boots were of the finest workmanship, and he wore huge Mexican spurs of silver.

A bowie-knife and a brace of Colt's army "sixes" were sustained about his waist by a belt of stamped leather. This was fastened in front by a clasp of silver which was engraved with the five-pointed star of Texas, and with an inscription which we omit, the name above it:

"WILLIAM WILLIAMSON,

BLANCO, TEXAS."

and below the same,

"BLANCO BILL, THE BOSS BUCCARO,

AND

MUSTANG MONARCH."

The animal which he rode was simply magnificent. Black as a coal, with the exception of a small white spot on the forehead, long and clean limbed, and in size just suitable for the one who bestrode it; with long, gracefully-arched neck, great intelligent eyes, and abundant and glossy mane and tail—such was the noble steed of Blanco Bill.

It was evidently one of the finest of the "Black Hawk" stock, reared in the blue-grass region of Kentucky—the State that justly prides itself upon producing some of the fastest and most superb horses in the world.

Built for strength, and speed as well, was this equine beauty; and its equipments were worthy of it, being of the finest and most highly-ornamented description. The name upon a silver plate that was riveted to the fore-strap of the bridle, was "Black Hawk."

The rider seemed in no great hurry. Not once did spur touch flank, and the bridle-reins hung loosely over the horn of the saddle; while, at times, the beast would bend its neck to one side or the other, and gaze up into its master's face. The arms of William Williamson were folded across his breast, his form was erect in his saddle, but his eyes were fixed in a steady gaze upon the saddle-horn, and a soft and saddened expression was upon his face—evidently born of the thoughts that ruled his mind.

At length the horse thrust its muzzle around, and touched its master's thigh, at the same time giving utterance to a low neighing, which seemed to arouse him. He quickly unfolded his arms, and spoke to his steed, in much the same manner he would have addressed a human comrade.

"Excuse me, Black Hawk, for having been absent-minded, and not paying you any more attention for so long a time. But, my pard, I was thinking of the old ranch far eastward. I could not spend my life there, so I left all, and you and I have roamed the Rio Grande country."

"I vowed to make my mark in the world, and instead of studying my fellow-man, have studied man's best friend; and I flatter myself I have not only learned much, but have benefited both horse and man."

"Your wildest brothers, Black Hawk, became tractable, gentle, and kind, under my treatment. Mine has been a grand study, with a grand object. And I have resolved to win a wider reputation yet. Never will I return to the old ranch until my fame has preceded me. In Texas, they call me the "Mustang Monarch," and also the "Boss Buccaro," or horse-breaker, because I can subdue the wild free-range half-breeds and mustangs, without recourse to Comanche-like cruelty."

"Even the dark-eyed senoritas, who cast ravishing glances at me, could never entice me from my self-imposed mission, which I consider a duty I owe to a much-abused and noble part

of creation. An influence has been given me, and I will cultivate the gift regardless of all allurements.

"Hal! hal! old pard! I reckon you do not think there is any real danger of my losing sight of my object in life, while I remain in these wilds? From appearances ahead, and from the reports that have been circulated in San Miguel, I judge that possibly I may be called up to subdue some war-painted savages, in place of mustangs; or that I may run into a party of little less savage white men.

"The mountain roamers are a rougher set I am told, than I have yet met, even on the Rio Grande; but I rather doubt that. However, Black Hawk, I believe you and I are capable of taking care of ourselves. One thing is certain—there is no danger, in these scenes, of my being fascinated by the bright eyes of some beautiful female, although I am of a susceptible age, and have a taste for the lovely in all things, animate and inanimate.

"Have no fears, Black Hawk, on that score. There is no cause here for your jealousy, for there are no women ahead, unless perhaps some hideous Apache squaws, and I sincerely hope none of those.

"But, look ahead, my noble steed! There is as grand a sight as ever human eye beheld, and with the consciousness that cool water, rest, and food await us at the base of yonder rocky range we can enjoy such a gorgeous vista."

Thus Blanco Bill talked to his four-footed pard, the animal seeming to enjoy hearing the sound of its master's voice, and to know that the words were addressed to it; for every time its name was mentioned, Black Hawk tossed his head proudly, the thick and glossy mane flowing with the quick movements.

And man and horse gazed at the golden sky, the dark peaks outlined against the same, and at the green, cool shades below, which promised a quiet, safe, and agreeable camp for the coming night; which, however, was not to pass so peacefully and pleasantly as the young man's words indicated he anticipated.

Had he been told that, although he had expressed his opinion to the effect that there could not possibly be any white woman in that wild region, there was a most beautiful maiden up the range, galloping down the same, but many miles away—had he been told this, and all that was to follow, he would have pronounced his informant insane, or an idiot.

But Blanco Bill was destined to "meet his fate"—a strange and checkered one.

On, at a gentle pace, rode the Mustang Monarch, the wandering boy from Blanco county, Texas, who had gained the title of the champion horse-breaker in his native State.

Soon after young Williamson had disappeared within the pines that stretched in a line across the entrance to the great gorge, and passing the wall of verdure, encamped upon the bank of the little stream, the head-waters of Moro river.

Black Hawk was divested of equipments, the horse drinking with avidity of the cool waters; and then, after rolling upon the green sward, he proceeded to tear the rich grass from the sod with keen gusto. The Mustang Monarch started a small fire, prepared coffee, and partook of his frugal prairie meal; all his belongings being kept at hand, ready to clutch at the instant of alarm; although, after inspecting the grassy bed of the gorge, he decided that no enemies were within the same.

Had he cast a glance over the prairie, on his back trail, before entering the pines, the young man would have discovered afar off a sight that would have caused him to seek a more retired place to camp.

This was an immense herd of horses, galloping wildly toward the gorge, with full a score of villainous-looking men, riding in the rear, on each side, and ahead of the herd, keeping the animals together.

Some of these men, it was evident, were white outlaws of the most desperate character. The remainder were low-browed, snake-eyed Mestizos, or half-breeds—men of mixed Mexican and Indian blood—who, in the paint and gear of war used by Apache braves, would have been taken to belong to that tribe.

On, at furious speed, over the grassy prairie, sped the white and yellow desperadoes, having at least a hundred horses in the herd, animals which had probably been stolen.

On, their black eyes fixed upon the entrance to the gorge, they dashed, until within a mile of the same; then the herd was halted, while two of their number spurred on ahead, to inspect the pines, or act as spies.

From their manner, as well as from their glances, which were murderously vengeful, one would have decided on the instant that they not only were aware of the presence of the Boss Buccaro, but were bent upon his murder.

Yet the Mustang Monarch knew not that he had an enemy in the world.

CHAPTER III. GRANDE GEORGE.

TEN days previous to the appearance of Blanco Bill at the great gorge in the Rockies, he had been at El Paso, on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande, and directly across the Bravo

from the town of Franklin. He had crossed the river for the purpose of viewing the ancient Mexican town; and, as he did not understand the Spanish language, he had rather a lonely walk for some time, although there were many interesting sights to be seen.

However, he was fortunate enough to meet an American, like himself from Texas, who was conversant with the language and customs of the people, and the two soon became well acquainted.

Our young friend had noticed that there was considerable excitement among the citizens, and he was not obliged to inquire of his new-found friend the cause; for the latter almost immediately invited him to accompany him to what was considered a very rare entertainment. That is, the taming of wild horses.

The Texan complained that a Spaniard recently arrived in El Paso, had announced publicly that he could subdue and tame the very wildest mustangs. As the Greasers are, themselves, generally very expert horse-breakers, in their way, it seemed absurd for a professional in that line to expect to win either renown or dollars. But they are exceedingly superstitious; and Senor Ronaldino Christobal, knowing this, had so worded his bombastic announcement as to insure himself a respectable audience, in point of numbers.

The Texan stranger had introduced himself as Grande George, a Fort Davis scout who was known and hated by the lawless Mexicans, who frequently made predatory incursions into the Lone Star State. On that account the scout was now, and at all times, on the alert.

When he informed Blanco Bill of the possible dangers ahead, the latter had given a careless laugh; and the scout inquired:

"Did yer git 'cross the drink wi' yer shooters, pard, that yer 'pears ter be so danged keerless 'bout hev'n' a circus wi' ther Greasers?"

"I rather think I did," was the reply, with a significant smile. "You don't suppose I would venture over the Bravo without arms?"

"I stuck a 'six' in each boot-leg, and my bowie down the back of my neck before I met the guard. That's the reason I walk so slow."

"Dog-gone me ef yer ain't up to snuff, pard! But who, in the name o' Crockett, air yer? I never heerd ther name o' Blanco Bill afore es I knows on."

"The boys generally call me the Mustang Monarch," was the quiet reply.

"Great snakes! Yer doesn't say so? Why, I'm all knocked up a standin'. Hyer we-uns air takin' in a hoss-show, a Greaser one et that; an' yeou the boss hoss-civilizer o' Texas!"

"Dang ef I don't smell fun ahead! I've heerd 'bout yer doin's et San Antone, an' I'm cussed glad ter hev runned ag'in' yer. What d'yer say, pard—ain't yer goin' ter show ther yaller-belly yer knows more 'bout nags than fourteen hundred and forty-four o' his sort?"

Blanco Bill laughed heartily, as he replied:

"I had no idea of meeting a rival in my chosen profession, pard George; but I'm glad, all the same, to have the opportunity. If there is a chance open, I don't mind giving the audience a specimen of my skill. But, perhaps he has rented the inclosure, and I will have no right in the arena."

"I'll find out," said Grande George; "an' any way I kin slip a doubloon in Pedro Garcia's yaller paw, an' make hit hunk fer yer. Ef we gits inter a risky racket, we'll jump a pair o' ther nags, an' gallop fer ther Grande. Air thet a whack, pard Bill?"

"I'm agreeable; but we mustn't take the horses across the river. I have no desire to figure as a horse-thief, especially in a country where it is considered a more heinous crime to steal a domestic animal than to break up a domestic circle, by shooting down the father of a family. We must remember that."

"Thet's all hunk, pard; though hit 'ud be a feather in yer cap ter run a hull herd over t'other side. But hyer we-uns air, an' thar's a heap o' humans packed in, ter gaze et ther king hoss-fly o' South 'Merica."

"Glide in ahindt me, an' don't be bashful; though I sees ther senior-eaters air gazin' et yer, right smart. Thar's a big flicker an' flutter 'mong ther caliker, my gentle Mustang Monarch, an' don't yer fergit hit."

Blanco Bill did not hear the last words uttered by the scout, for his eyes and mind were fully occupied with the scene before him.

The inclosure was of considerable extent, formed like a corral, the posts being some twelve feet in height. The seats were arranged after the manner of an amphitheater, the barrier of the arena being about five feet high.

The arena itself was fully thirty yards in diameter, and covered thinly with sand; neither man nor animal being inside when our two friends arrived. The seats, however, were nearly all filled with Mexicans of both sexes; and many an eye flashed with hatred and fury, when they caught sight of the hated Americans.

A party of Greasers were playing upon musical instruments, but their attempts at harmony were far from pleasing to the ear.

As it happened the Texans gained seats just as, with a grand flourish of wind instruments, the self-styled "Champion Horse Educator of

South America" sprung from the gates of the bull-pen, on one side of the arena, into the same; and bowing to the earth, in acknowledgment of the loud *vivas*, strutted, with a long whip in hand, around the sanded circle.

Senor Ronaldino Christobal was about five feet seven inches in height, of strong and sinewy build, and extremely quick of movement. He was, it was quite apparent, of an excessively nervous temperament.

His hair and eyes were black, the latter being cunning and treacherous in expression. His face was ghastly in color, being more corpse-like from the contrast with its framework of long black hair, which hung straight over his shoulders, like that of an Indian. And the black mustache and goatee, both of which were long, and waxed to sharp-pointed ends.

Both our friends were unfavorably impressed by the champion at first sight, and pronounced him a designing fraud.

"Jist ther galoot I'd like ormighty well ter see yer make wilt inter his butes," whispered Grande George. "But I'm goin' ter hunt arter Pedro Garcia. I'll see yer later, pard."

With these words the scout disappeared, going toward the entrance.

Soon, with a grand flourish, two mustangs were let into the arena, and several of the champion's attendants, all Greasers, bounded in, lassoes in hand.

A mustang was quickly brought to earth when at full speed, but the actions of Christobal afterward, filled Blanco Bill with contempt and indignation.

He sprung upon the head of the prostrate beast, inserted his fingers in its mouth, and at once inclosed the lower jaw in a slip-noose of rawhide rope—the jaw-strap used by the Indians. Then every lasso was detached from the animal by the attendants, and the mustang sprung to its feet, the champion at the same time bounding upon its back.

For a moment the animal stood as if paralyzed. Then, quivering in every nerve, it sprung high in air, giving as many as a dozen leaps up and down, while the cruel whip of its rider lashed its hams continuously. Then around the arena galloped the affrighted beast at terrific speed, the champion yelling like a Comanche and lashing it unmercifully, until it was forced to stop from fatigue and nervous prostration. Loud *vivas* rent the air. Evidently the animal was subdued.

Now this was no more than any *vaquero* present could have done, but it had been accomplished in so systematic a manner and with such theatrical display that the Mexicans could not withhold their admiration. To the Mustang Monarch, however, it was a cruel exhibition.

The other animal was subdued in the same manner, and others followed. Then it was announced by a crier that two of the most vicious horses procurable would be, one at a time, let into the ring. These were to be broken in without assistance from the attendants.

Blanco Bill watched each motion of Senor Christobal, and noticed that he changed his whip for one of heavier stock and shorter in length. This he held in hand by the middle of the largest portion of the stock, holding the lash behind him.

At this moment Grande George joined his friend, and whispered:

"Hit's all hunk, my festive Mustang King. I've rented ther hull outfit from this on, in your name, an' paid fer hit. Pedro knows this cuss air a second-class fraud; 'sides thet, he doesn't pay nothin'. Ef thar's any show ter give ther South 'Meriky galoot away, lunge right in, an' I'm ready ter back yer wi' six an' bowie."

"Thanks," returned Bill; "I believe he's going to play a trick, that it will be strange to me if many do not detect it. If not, I'll show him up, just for fun. Watch that whip of his!"

Barely had these words passed the lips of the Mustang Monarch, when out from the gate sprung a magnificent black mustang stallion, its eyes blazing, its forefeet in the air, and walking upon its hind hoofs directly toward Senor Ronaldino Christobal.

No more terrible and dangerous animals could have been brought into that arena. The champion stood firm, awaiting the shock; or, as many believed, awaiting his death. One blow from those terrible hoofs would crush him, a mangled corpse, to earth; there to be stamped into a shapeless mass!

But, cool and calm stood Senor Christobal, until it seemed that but an instant was between him and a terrible death. Then, up went the butt of his whip, by a lightning-like movement; being held for an instant stationary, at the very nostrils of the frantic beast.

The audience sprung to their feet in horror, but the next moment filled the air with *vivas*, in relief, admiration, and astonishment.

And why?

For a very good reason. The furious mustang stallion had instantly sunk to a natural position, seemingly at the order of the champion; its fiery eyes became bereft of vengeful fierceness, and it walked listlessly along, led by the fore-lock by Senor Christobal, who proudly stalked around the arena once, and then, as if cager to astonish his audi-

ence again, and insure his success and renown in that region, he relinquished the listless steed to an assistant at the gate, and then, with a strut, and a flourish of his arms in vaunting gestures, ordered the wild prairie equine into the arena.

On the instant that the manner and position of the black mustang had been so suddenly changed, Blanco Bill uttered an exclamation, which indicated that that which had occurred was exactly as he had anticipated. Then he said, in a low voice:

"Pard George, I suppose you saw through that trick! Now I am ready for biz, on the jump, when I see an opening."

"I see'd nothin' 'ceptin' that ther white-faced cuss wi' ther black ha'r did a ormighty big thing an' saved his brain-box from bein' smashed by ther wile hoss's huffs; though I couldn't tell, I sw'ar, how 'twas did."

"I'll show you, George, and I'll show this whole audience too, directly. Watch and wait, pard!"

CHAPTER IV.

VICTORY AND FLIGHT.

As Blanco Bill spoke, the gates of the bull-pen flew open, and then followed a shriek like the last outcry of a lost soul—a shriek of such agony and dread as to curdle the blood in one's veins.

All sprung to their feet once more, as from the gates, dashed a wild-eyed, furious, and savage mustang, of most powerful build; holding fast in its jaws the mangled form of a man, which the beast shook furiously, as a dog would a rat!

The man's skull had been crushed by the hoofs of the maddened mustang, the brains and blood covering the corpse and the animal; the gore in strong contrast to the inky black coat of the frantic steed, which foamed at the mouth, white flecks flying over its glossy coat amid the blood-splashes, presenting a most horrible picture!

Instantly, however, upon entering the arena, as the audience gave vent to their horror in one simultaneous groan, that was half a yell, the horse dropped its victim, and sprung forward, with blood and foam dripping from its wide-open jaws, and then reared upward. But, before the furious animal reached that point in the barrier to which it had started, a piercing shriek again cut the air; and the appalled audience beheld a beautiful little girl, some seven years of age—evidently of Castilian parentage, and of wealth and rank—fall headlong over the barrier into the arena; while, the next moment, with a scream of fury that was terrific to hear, the wild stallion reared within six feet of the prostrate and fear-paralyzed child, as if about to crush her beneath its hoofs!

The vast throng again arose quickly to their feet with prayerful ejaculations and loud cries of horror.

The moment had arrived for the Mustang Monarch to act.

Casting aside his sombrero, in one mad bound he cleared the barrier into the arena, landing directly between the blood and foam smeared uprearing stallion, and its angelic victim—the child who seemed doomed, inevitably, to a fearful death!

The next moment, the little one was clutched by the young Texan, and tossed up to her horror-stricken and shrieking parents, in safety.

Then Blanco Bill faced the maddened mustang, that, standing almost straight upon its hind legs, cut the air with electric-like velocity with its fore hoofs; the same barely clearing the calm and fearless face of the young man, who, with arms folded across his breast, gazed straight into the eyes of the wild horse.

It was an imposing, an impressive scene!

The *vivas* that sprung from the crowd, upon witnessing this daring deed, were simply deafening.

All attention was centered upon the brave, handsome, and athletic Americano, who, all believed had sacrificed his life to save the angelic child, which had been recognized as the daughter of an old Castilian don.

None believed that the young stranger could possibly save himself from a most terrible death.

Senor Christobal had been, at first, filled with the most abject terror, as he saw that one of his attendants had been crushed and mangled to death by the mustang; then, as he realized that he himself was safe, and the young girl was safe through the exertions of the American, he felt a most intense relief, which changed suddenly to a fiendish rage. His hand clutched at his knife, through the murderous jealousy that ruled him; but, believing that the man who had thus drawn all attention from him, was doomed, the self-styled Champion Horse Educator of South America stood in his tracks, and awaited developments. And, not long had he to wait.

The stallion, to the amazement and furious rage of Christobal, and the relief and wonder of the audience, sunk slowly to a natural position, and then walked gently up beside the hero.

The face of Christobal was contorted in a frightful manner. He foamed at the mouth, and gnashed his white teeth, from which his lips curled away, like those of a wild beast.

Loud *vivas* for the Americano filled the air,

from fresh red lips as well as from bearded mouths; torturing the champion of the arena almost beyond endurance. But his fury was as nothing to the frantic madness that quickly followed; creating a thirst for blood that would never grow less until the hated rival, who had so humiliated him, lay mangled and dead at his feet!

What had caused this?

Naught else than the bounding of Blanco Bill from the back of the subdued mustang to the side of Christobal, and the snatching of the whip from his hand.

Holding this high, and walking around the arena, the young Texan at times touched a spring in the stock, which caused a spray of liquid to fly through the air from the butt of the implement.

Into the ring ran a dog, and the Mustang Monarch, pointing the whip close to the animal's nose, gave the spring a touch. The dog's energy seemed suddenly to have been banished, and it staggered along with drooping head.

Gazing significantly around the audience, which cheered loudly, the young Texan tossed the whip to the Castilian whose little daughter he had saved.

Instantly a heavy purse of gold fell at his feet.

This he tossed back to the old gentleman, with a graceful wave of his hand, in adieu; and, throwing a kiss at the little one so lately rescued from a fearful death, Blanco Bill turned about, hearing the voice of Grande George:

"Come on, my festive Mustang Monarch!" yelled the scout. "Come on, or be carved by Greaser knives!"

And none too soon came this warning.

Our two friends, with revolvers in hand, blazing right and left, but not to kill, cleared their way through the midst of the villains who had rallied at the side of Senor Christobal, prepared to cut the Texans to pieces.

Bounding upon the first pair of horses that they reached, the two young men galloped to and crossed the Rio Grande; leaving the animals with some friendly Mexicans, who were paid to return them.

And thus, as Blanco Bill believed, ended his experiences connected with El Paso; for, although the Champion of South America sent him word that he would have his life—that revenge should be his to the death—yet the brave young Texan gave the message no second thought, and the next day bade good-by to Grande George, proceeding north in the direction of the Rocky Mountains. But, unsuspected by him, his trail was followed by a band of outlaw assassins, in the pay of and led by Senor Ronaldino Christobal, the Champion Horse Breaker of South America.

CHAPTER V.

THE OUTLAWS ON THE TRAIL.

THE excitement at the arena on the outskirts of El Paso, after the rapid flight of the Mustang Monarch and Grande George, was intense.

Those who had rushed to the assistance of Christobal were the followers, or employees, of the latter, and those of the audience who had hoped something would occur to favor an assault by them on the hated Americanos. Many Mexican "rustlers," or cattle-thieves, were present who had good cause to wish Grande George under the sod. Therefore, without considering the injustice of their actions, or the fact that the strange young Texan had exposed the South American as a fraud, many rushed, with *cuchillos* in hand, to hack the detested Americans in pieces.

The prompt action and rapid flight of our two friends, however, saved the lives of both, and then left behind not a few who were marked by their well-aimed bullets, although none of the Greasers had received serious wounds—Blanco Bill having requested the scout to not kill a single man, but aim to wound lightly.

Senor Christobal acted more like a raving maniac than a sane being.

He at first believed that he was doomed, that the exposure of his trick by the Texan, whose marvelous influence over the last wild steed, which had so nearly caused a second awful tragedy, had filled him with wonder, would cause the Mexicans present to mob him. He was, therefore, exceedingly relieved and gratified upon receiving assistance when he had expected assault.

When he saw that the two young men had appropriated horses to escape from them, he was intensely rejoiced, for this gave him an excuse to follow them over the river and shoot them down on sight.

Well did Christobal know that he was ruined professionally in Mexico, that no longer could he put forward his boasting claims. He foamed at the mouth as this conviction was forced upon him. He felt sure that even the Greaser outlaws, who had rushed forward to slay the Americans, would, after the excitement was over, sneer at and detest him, if not seek his life. It was not a pleasant outlook.

He had seen the stranger Texan toss the tell-tale whip up to the old Castilian. He knew that the latter was very wealthy and influential—in fact, high in the confidence of the Government;

and from the fact that the American had rescued the child at the risk of his life, the father would, from gratitude, exhibit a friendship which would be enmity to himself.

From such reasoning, the ex-champion decided that it was not safe for him to remain in El Paso; and he quickly got together his followers, ordered them to saddle up, and he would lead them to a safe place, he being careful in impressing them with the fact that the lives of all were in danger if they remained.

Christobal, having used trickery himself, believed that this American was also a fraud, and realized the necessity of convincing his ignorant Mexicans of this, as their naturally superstitious natures might lead them to believe that the young man had powers given him by the Evil One. This would put them in such fear that it would be impossible to engage them to hunt his rival to the death, as he had fully determined to do.

Senor Ronaldino Christobal was naturally of a tigerish disposition, and his hatred of the American who had exposed and humiliated him ruled his whole being; causing him to banish all else from his depraved mind except the longing for the revenge which he swore by all the saints in the calendar should be his sooner or later.

He had not the slightest doubt as to his succeeding in his designs, as he was well supplied with money, which had been gained in his tour through Mexico; and more from the poor deluded ignoramus who believed in his power to heal the sick, than from his profits in the arena.

To plan was to act with this South American adventurer. Indeed he felt the necessity for a half score of disreputable cut-throats, who had been in his employ since he had exhibited at Chihuahua—nearly all being Mestizos, or half-breeds—he galloped from the scene of his exposure and disgrace, into El Paso. There he secured his gold and most easily transported effects and with his gang at once left the town; proceeding up the bank of the Rio Grande for some miles, and then encamping in the chaparral.

Upon being established in this camp, the miscreant at once dispatched one of his men, as a spy, over the river, to watch the movements of the hated Texans whom he had sworn to kill; and to report at once when they left the town of Franklin, and also as to the trail they had taken. For the infuriated villain had still sense enough left to know that it would be impossible for him to accomplish his wish until after his intended victims left the Texan city.

This spy having departed, Christobal bribed two more of his followers to return to El Paso, and engage ten of the most desperate and daring horse-thieves they could find; telling his men openly that he intended to combine profit with revenge, and steal a large herd of horses from the Americans before returning to Mexican soil.

At this announcement the low-browed, treacherous-looking Greasers were jubilant, and rent the air with their rejoicing; becoming more boisterous as Christobal gave to the two Mexicans who were to return to El Paso sufficient money to purchase a score of revolvers, with the necessary ammunition; these to be distributed equally upon their return if successful in their mission.

These arrangements having been made, the South American announced that he was a Peruvian born, and had unlimited credit in any large city of Mexico, being of noble birth. This, he knew, would insure him the respect and obedience of the ignorant men whom he was determined to use in accomplishing his purpose; for, since he had had time to ponder upon the sudden change in his fortunes and prospects, he had somewhat altered his plans.

Had he merely wished to slay the hated American who had foiled him, it would not have been necessary for him to have engaged such a number of followers.

His new idea was to capture the Texan *bucaro*, and torture him into a betrayal of his secret influence over wild horses.

Christobal was puzzled as to the nature of this influence, as well he might be; but, he felt positive that there was some jugglery about it, the nature of which he determined to know, and to become possessed of. He would force the American to reveal his secret, and then slay his hated rival, thus regaining his lost prestige, and indeed becoming far more celebrated than ever, and with untold gold at his command.

With the power, so mysterious, of this American, he would be the monarch of the horse kingdom, as well as ruler among all the superstitious people of the Spanish-American republics.

These thoughts and conclusions tended to make Christobal feel less discouraged and more hopeful; but it did not lessen his thirst for revenge, which would continue just as intense and ungovernable, even after he should have forced the secret from his intended victim.

There was not one spark of gratitude in his base heart toward the brave young stranger, although he well knew his rival could have easily rushed behind him in the arena, and thus left him to be trampled and crushed by the infuriated mustang.

The night passed, the two Greasers returning before the sun arose from El Paso with not only the revolvers and ammunition, but the full num-

ber of ruffianly border thieves and marauders; some of whom, to the surprise of Christobal and those of his men in camp, were Texans.

These explained that they were outlaws—that they could not traverse the north side of the Rio Grande, except at the risk of life; and that they had, by crimes committed, forfeited all rights of citizenship in the United States.

They were without either arms or means, and were anxious to join any party for any object. After the Peruvian ascertained that they were well acquainted with the trails of New Mexico and Texas—being satisfied that they had given a correct account of themselves, as their condition went far to prove—he engaged them at once.

Horses, arms and equipments were distributed and put in order; and, before night, the spy from Franklin returned with the information that the American who had so excited the hatred of his employer, had left town, proceeding toward Santa Fe; while the Texan scout, who had been in his company, still remained in Franklin.

Christobal was rejoiced.

All was as it should be.

He cared little for the Texan, although he took pains not to betray this fact to those of his followers who thirsted for the blood of Grande George. He resolved at once to cross the river and start on the trail, assuring his men, who were interested in the killing of the scout, that the latter would undoubtedly soon follow his pard and fall into their power.

Upon their return they would seek for and slay the object of their hate; but they must now, and at once, make sure of the man who had crossed the Rio Grande on purpose to break up the horse-show, and who had been the means of wounding so many of them. Not a few of the band had had their flesh torn by bullets, and were eager for revenge on one, if they could not secure both of the Gringos.

Food was procured, each man packing several days' rations in his buckskin saddle-bags; while a large quantity of dried beef, corn, coffee, sugar, and the inevitable *chile* of the Mexican, was packed upon two mules which were taken in the lead.

Thus the newly organized band of outlaws made ready, crossed the river and proceeded on the Santa Fe trail; but, as has been seen, Blanco Bill, upon Black Hawk, reached San Miguel, and proceeded up the east base of the Rocky Mountains, in place of the west to Santa Fe, before being overtaken by Christobal and his cut-throat followers.

However, the latter did not lose the trail, but kept on toward the head of Moro river, as had been stated; for the herd of horses, being driven in the direction of the young Texan's camp by a band of desperate-looking men, were none other than Christobal and his followers. All were doubly infuriated at having failed to overtake their intended victim; having been obliged to travel many days beneath a burning sun.

Doubtless all would have turned back and left their leader to seek his revenge alone, had they not met a small party of Apaches who had with them a large herd of stolen horses. These animals were captured by the outlaws, and all the Indians slain, except one, who escaped to the mountains.

The miscreants were fated to realize that the escape of that lone brave would prove to be a much regretted occurrence. Indeed, although they gave the warrior in question no thought after he had disappeared from their view, they were, in the near future, doomed to recall his escape, and its dread import to themselves.

CHAPTER VI.

AT BAY.

THE band of outlaws soon knew that the man they had so long followed, had turned up the eastern, instead of the western side of the range.

One of their number had traced him to San Miguel, and for some distance beyond it, and, rejoining the band, they all hastened on the trail.

Owing to the gloom near the range at sunset, they failed to observe at what point their intended victim had encamped; but the thin column of smoke, from his camp-fire, had revealed to them his presence.

Christobal was insanely exultant. He gave out a liberal drink of *mescal* to each of the band and then dispatched two of his men, to ascertain if the American was aware of the presence of their party.

Blanco Bill had no idea that it was possible for any danger to threaten him from the back trail. He had not once looked behind him. Consequently, after enjoying his frugal supper, he secured Black Hawk near the camp, and threw himself upon his blankets for repose; having spread his "lay-out" for the night on the soft carpet of dead leaves within the shade of the fragrant pines, and concealed from view, as well as sheltered from the bright moon.

Totally unconscious of the deadly dangers that threatened him, the Mustang Monarch fell into a deep sleep.

The two outlaws, who had been sent forward as spies had not been chosen by their leader with good judgment; for one was a Texan and

the other a half-breed, and they hated each other like rattlesnakes.

It so happened, that the programme made out by Christobal was to be changed to a considerable extent—in fact, to such an extent as to infuriate him and all his gang—for they did not wish to venture further up the range, although all were ignorant of any ranch or town in that vicinity.

Both of the spies dismounted, secured their horses, and approached the base of the range; taking advantage of every boulder or thicket, to shield themselves from view. There was a rivalry between the two worthies, as to which would first discover the man of whom they were in search. Neither, however, betrayed this to the other; for not a word was spoken between them.

They had orders not to venture so near the American as to betray their presence. Each drew his knife, ready for defense, proving that they were not sure they might not themselves be surprised, in place of being able to approach the camp of the lone traveler without being discovered by him.

They also slipped their revolvers around to their front, ready for instant use. Both, it was evident, entertained the idea that the man they were seeking was one to be feared—one who, if he detected their approach, would not hesitate to shoot them down at once.

Soon the scent of tobacco-smoke cautioned the skulkers to proceed with more caution; and they fell upon their knees, crawling forward, their knife-blades being held tightly between their teeth. Thus they passed through the wall-like growth of pines, which stretched across the mouth of the gorge.

Peeping through the foliage, the spies discovered the black horse quietly feeding, the manner of the animal proving that he had nearly satisfied his hunger, and would undoubtedly be alarmed at the slightest noise, thus awakening his master, should the latter be asleep. Judging that the owner of such a valuable beast would not be far removed from him, the miscreants crawled toward the pines, beneath which he was then sleeping; but Black Hawk, as it happened, just then concluded to take advantage also of the soft carpet made by the pine needles.

As the hoofs of the horse made no sound, he had reached a point beyond where his master lay, before the spies gained a position from which they could inspect the border of the *motte* nearest to the clear portion of the gorge. They had not heard the animal, as Black Hawk stood silent and motionless after gaining his position; and it was quite dark beneath the pines. They, therefore, failed to observe the horse, that was directly in their path.

The consequence was, that they were appalled by a terrific snort, and the bounding of Black Hawk, crashing through the branches, and directly upon them.

With half-suppressed cries of fright and alarm, both sprung to their feet, and rushed forward toward the moonlight, dreading the darkness, which might conceal their intended victim, who had it in his power now to turn the tables on them.

At the snort of his horse, Blanco Bill, awoke, and arose to a sitting posture. He was greatly bewildered, and unable to understand, for some moments, the nature of the sound that had startled him from a deep sleep. He did not perceive that his noble steed had been alarmed. He only knew that danger threatened, and he clutched at his knife and revolver.

Before, however, he had his weapons free from their scabbards, there was a sudden rush through the pines, and two men, with terrible curses, fell over him. Blanco Bill then saw what had been intended.

The outlaws, also, realized their danger.

Caring nothing for each other, they clutched their knives, and struck out wildly.

The Mustang Monarch felt the cut of a blade upon his shoulder, and knew that only by slaying his unknown foes could he hope to save his life. With a superhuman effort, he sprung to his feet—both outlaws clinging to him, and lunging desperately on all sides with their knives. The wonder was that he escaped.

But, with a grasp of iron, Blanco Bill twitched the assassins back and forth, and hurled them with terrific force against each other.

This manner of proceeding lasted but a moment or two. Then, as our young friend had no chance to use his knife, his weapons having been dropped in the struggle, he drew both his antagonists quickly toward him, and then, with all his strength, hurled them out into the open moonlight. They fell, with curses, upon the sward.

The blood of Blanco Bill was now up. Life and death, he well knew, depended upon prompt and vigorous action on his part.

He had been positive that some mistake had been made—that he had been taken for some one else. He knew, as soon as he clutched his foes, that they were not Indians. It was evident, also, that they had knives in their hands, and had used every endeavor to slay him; and that, without any caution as to inflicting wounds upon each other.

They must, he thought, be bent upon murder,

with the object of robbery; and the darkness and their excitement in being so startled by Black Hawk, and then falling over him, had crushed them to such an extent that they knew not, in the rough and tumble struggle, who it was they were clutching.

Quickly did these thoughts flash through the mind of the young Texan, and quick were his motions. He stooped, and ran his hands over the leafy carpet; fortunately laying hold of his bowie and revolver at the same time.

The next instant, he bounded free of the pines, and into the silvery moonlight, just as the brace of assassins regained their feet, and turned to rush upon him. A single glance proved to Blanco Bill that the men before him were of the most depraved and desperate class; men, to whom the life of a human being was no more than that of a dog; and also, that they were thirsting for his blood.

The Greaser, with long knife in hand, sprung forward ahead of the outlaw Texan; the latter drawing his revolver.

It was an impressive tableau.

The Mustang Monarch sprung out boldly, to face the villainous pair of assassins, both of whom halted instantly at the unexpected appearance of the man they had believed to be seeking safety in flight, beyond the pines.

"Carajo!" exclaimed the Mexican. Then, with his lips curled away from his white teeth, and his serpent-like eyes flashing, he snarled out an oath, and darted forward—his clothing covered with blood, his sombrero gone, and his long, black matted hair flying from his shoulders with the force of his spring. Half-bent, and panther-like, the Mestizo, with murder in his eyes, bounded toward Blanco Bill.

The Texan outlaw followed close after.

Then, with a wild snort, out from the pines dashed Black Hawk, and leaped directly between the Texan and the Greaser; cutting off the latter, and without doubt saving his master's life. The white outlaw had already presented his revolver, to shoot Blanco Bill down, while his Mexican pard alone held the young man's attention.

It was a critical moment for the "Boss Bucaro," but he was equal to the situation.

Scorning to use his revolver, as the half-breed had not drawn his six-shooter, the young Texan sprung to meet his yellow-skinned foe. Then followed a lightning-like play of steel, while the noble black steed acted as a barrier against the advance of the murderous outlaw—a barrier, however, which could but for a moment or two prevent the latter from assisting his swarthy comrade.

The attempt was soon made, but Black Hawk seemed to comprehend that the strangers were foes to his master, and shot his hind hoofs outward, striking, but not heavily, the Texan outlaw upon the shoulder. With a fierce oath, the kicked miscreant fell to the earth.

Meanwhile, sparks of fire flew from the fast-clashing knives of the combatants; the bright blades glinting in the silvery moonlight, Blanco Bill bending, and fixing his steady gaze into the eyes of his Greaser opponent. All this time, Bill knew what had occurred in the rear of the Mexican; and felt that, at any instant, a bullet might be planted in his brain by the Texan, who had thus far been balked by Black Hawk. Not a moment was to be lost.

The Mexican must die!

Thus decided the young man, and by a quick and powerful blow he broke the guard of the Greaser, and then plunged his bowie, buck-horn deep, into the breast of his foe.

Up over his head were thrown both hands of the half-breed, a gurgling cry came from his lips, from which welled his life-current; then, as the Mustang Monarch jerked his knife free from the Greaser's breast, and an arch of blood spurted forth, the yellow marauder fell, with a heavy sound, dead upon the sward, his sightless eyes fixed upon the star-studded heavens.

No sooner did the Mexican fall dead than Blanco Bill jerked his revolver; for he saw the Texan bound desperately to his feet, with a murderous expression in his eyes. But, before our friend could take aim, the sharp crack of the white outlaw's weapon sounded; and with a whir, the bullet passed within an inch of his head. Scarcely, however, had the echoes died away when the fire was returned; and, with an awful yell of agony and dread, the remaining assassin fell, a corpse, upon the bed of the gorge.

Just then, wild and vengeful yells sounded from the plain beyond the wall of pines; and Bill knew that the two miscreants he had slain had many comrades near, who were now hastening to assist, or, avenge them. The end was not yet.

His life was still in great danger.

Flight he must make, and at once; and the only avenue of escape was up the gorge.

With quickness and dexterity, Blanco Bill equipped his noble beast, to which he had no doubt he owed his life; patting the animal's neck and muzzle, and, speaking kind words to him. In a very short space of time, the Mustang Monarch was ready for flight; when, to his amazement, he heard the thunder of a multitude of hoofs, approaching at a terrific rate of speed—the fierce yells of men sounding high above all the din and tumult.

Bewildered and amazed, not knowing how to account for these sounds, but having no doubt that the men who thus yelled were comrades of the assassins he had just slain, the young man urged his horse up the great gorge toward the heart of the range, hoping to discover some branch of the gulch, which would afford him an opportunity to avoid his foes, who, he was forced to decide, must be outlaws, who had observed him on the plain when he approached the range.

Not for a moment did Blanco Bill entertain any thought of his experience in the arena of El Paso; much less did he connect his recent assailants with what had there taken place.

On, up the gorge, he galloped, until he came near its head. All around him, except the way by which he had come, were towering rocky cliffs, insurmountable barriers to a horseman; and he felt that he must, then and there, stand and fight to the death.

Drawing rein, he listened intently, his apprehensions deepening; for the dull rumble of hoofs below still sounded, and seemed fast approaching.

The moon cast but little light down into the deep gorge.

Blanco Bill felt that the great crisis of his life was at hand.

Was he to be shot like a dog, and then trampled beneath the hoofs of the very animals to which he had devoted his life?

Such a fate seemed inevitable.

Certain it was, he was effectually "corraled."

Still, he sat Black Hawk, undaunted, and awaited developments; guiding the horse behind a spur of rock, and then drawing his revolvers.

CHAPTER VII.

A FRESH COMPLICATION.

ABOUT the same time that Blanco Bill, upon Black Hawk, entered the great gorge, ten miles south of Last Lay-out, and encamped there, there might have been seen, nearly the same distance north of the mining town mentioned, and proceeding slowly along the base of the range toward the south, a lone female equestrian.

It was a strange sight, on that wild frontier, at the base of the Rocky Mountains, more especially as the female in question was a beautiful maiden of eighteen. But, from the girl's manner, one who saw her at this time would have known that she had an escort; for she made frequent halt, gazing keenly on all sides of the range, besides calling out, in a silvery voice, but with considerable impatience in its tone:

"Ted! O-o-oh, Teddy McCarthy!"

No response came to the call.

Maid and mustang made up a most lovely picture, one to chain the attention and hold the admiration of the most senseless of dolts, to say nothing of a person of sense and artistic taste. The girl was small in stature, with well-rounded form. Her features were Grecian in type, and her every movement, together with the flash of her bright eyes and raven black hair, proved that she was quick in thought and act. It also indicated a fearlessness and a will power not often met with in one of her sex, especially at her age.

An abundance of glossy hair, black as midnight, hung free to the cantle of her saddle, but prevented from flaunting over her ears in front, when at speed, or in the wind, by a cheery-colored ribbon, through which ran a vine of gold.

Her wide-brimmed felt hat was bedecked with prairie flowers, and her costume consisted of a black riding-habit, the tight-fitting basque waist of which revealed the perfection of her form.

But the horse, which the young girl rode, was even more remarkable than the four-footed pard of the Mustang Monarch. This animal was of the kind called in Texas, a "paint," and in Mexico, a "pinto," both words having the same meaning—and, indeed, one would think that the beast had stampeded through a paint-shop.

Spots and splashes of white, black, sorrel, and in fact every color ever seen upon a horse, were matched upon the coat of this noble mustang; and, at a short distance away, one might not have been considered much off the trail, had he never before seen such an animal, to have advanced the opinion that he had been fitted up with close-fitting tights throughout, and those made from a "crazy quilt."

In regard to build, the beast was a model of beauty, and graceful in action. Its limbs were slender and long, its neck the same, and with an abundant and wavy mane. Both mane and tail were black, which gave it a still more strange and peculiar appearance.

A circus proprietor would have yelled with delight, on beholding the animal we have endeavored to describe.

This beautiful wanderer of the wilds was Kathleen Jordan—called Katie, by those whom she honored with her friendship—and, to her much-prized steed, she had given the name of Calico.

Her presence at the Rocky Mountains, and her object, will be explained as we proceed.

Some distance in the rear of the horseman was a diminutive burro, or donkey, which had long, huge ears, that flapped listlessly, as if hung to the animal's head by hinges. Considering the

small size of the beast, its ears were particularly noticeable; in fact, one might readily believe it to have been the veritable jackass described so graphically by "Josh Billings" in his peculiar Natural History, as a "bird that had wings upon the side of its head."

This burro had upon its back all the necessary cooking utensils used by a small party of prairie campers, together with food, and extra clothing and blankets. It stopped quite frequently to graze, but kept an eye on the fair equestrian ahead, and when the latter would gain some distance in advance, the burro would jerk up its head, and trot along to a point near the heels of "Calico," when it would stop, and again begin feeding.

Katie paid little attention to this small beast of burden, seeming to be occupied wholly by a close inspection of the range in search of her escort, she frequently calling aloud, as has been mentioned. Calico appeared to understand the object of his fair mistress; for, every time she thus summoned her wandering protector, the horse would halt, and prick up its slender ears, while it gazed along the base of the range. It would then arch its neck, and cast sweeping glances up the side of the mountains.

Thus on went Katie Jordan, Calico, and the burro, southward; while the shadows of the peaks lengthened afar out over the eastern plain and the golden sky to the west, high over the adamant range grew less and less brilliant. At length, as the darkened shades gave notice of the near approach of night, the maiden seemed suddenly to realize with all its desolation and dangers, her true position.

She gave a despairing look around, and her eyes were blinded with tears; which, however, she immediately dashed from her cheek. In a little time, emotions of fear, such as she had never before experienced, began to dart through her mind; which, to a certain extent, she expressed aloud:

"May Heaven protect me, and you too, Calico, my pet; for we must camp to-night for the first time without our devoted friend, Teddy. I fear he is in danger somewhere, or perhaps he has been wounded by wild beasts, or by those terrible Indians, of whom I have heard so much, but have always laughed at when my dear mother strove to frighten me, and prevent my going on my self-imposed mission."

"Surely the hearts of all at home in far-away Scranton, would be tortured to-night, did they know that I was riding alone and unprotected on the wild frontier of America and night coming on!"

"Oh, Patsey Jordan! my wayward, wandering brother! Why did you leave those who loved you so, to go to the wild West, and, worse than all, neglect to write to us? Surely he knew that we all loved him dearly; but go he would, for he was a willful and stubborn boy. Indeed, we all are that—every Jordan of us—as my present position proves; for, in spite of all that could be said and done to prevent me, I would come to seek for Patsey. And, what a hopeless search it seems!"

"Often have I heard of him as flying from one new 'find,' or digging, to another; and I fear it will be a fruitless mission I have come upon. My mother must have been right in saying that I was a wild and strange girl from having been born in the middle of the broad Atlantic Ocean, my infant eyes opening upon the maddened surf; for even here, surrounded by unknown dangers, and alone, with night coming on, I feel filled with admiration for these magnificent mountains with their dark, yawning gulches, seams and chasms."

"But, dear me! if anything has happened to that good old soul, Teddy McCarthy, whose devotion to me and mine almost surpasses belief, may I be forgiven! For it will be my fault if harm in any shape comes to him. How selfish I have been! And then, what if my brother should be dead?"

"But, no; it cannot be! Patsey is not dead. He lives, and I will find him. But now, Calico, you and I must camp. Yonder is a beautiful place—a small cove in the side of the range, and with a spring near, as I know by the greener and more luxuriant grass and willows. Come, Texas!—this was said in a louder voice to the burro—"you make sure of plenty of grass as you lag along. Come on, and I will relieve you of that load. You are a patient, uncomplaining and most valuable servant."

Touching the flank of Calico lightly with her spur, Katie Jordan guided the horse between two mottles of pines into a grass-grown space in the side of the range; towering cliffs, rough and broken, being upon three sides, and the bases of the same being lined with dense pines, the very extreme of dreary in appearance.

Straight up to a little spring of water by the side of some willows dashed the young girl, her horse eager to slake his thirst, and the burro following, no less eager.

The pool of water was nearly reached—in deed, but a few paces intervened between it and the on-speeding Calico—when suddenly out from the willows shot, with a snort of pain at the prick of a knife, a half-wild steed, astride of which was a nearly naked, paint-daubed and feather-bedizened Apache traveler!

The snake-like eyes of the savage glared exultantly and gloatingly from between the bars of white gypsum and vermillion into the face of Kathleen Jordan.

The repulsive lips parted, as a single guttural ejaculation was grunted forth:

"Ugh!"

Calico halted instantly, with ears protruding forward, eyes bulging in fright, and limbs planted stiff and rigid, his hoofs sinking in the soft sward with the force of the instantaneous halt from headlong speed.

Few could have retained their seat in the saddle, but the young girl sat firm; her rosy face losing every vestige of color, her eyes frozen, in dread terror and repulsive horror, upon the painted, fiendish Apache.

Her very lips were bloodless and parted, while she clutched the bridle-reins lightly, incapable for the moment of movement or speech. Indeed, she was breathless with dumfounded astonishment and despairing dread.

Even Texas, the unimpressive burro, gazed in something like amazement, his long ears gradually becoming elevated, seemingly reluctantly, until they were rigid, and pointed straight toward the red warrior of the mountains and llanos.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RIDE FOR LIFE.

THE Mustang Monarch was in a most peculiar and dangerous position.

This he fully realized.

Not that he felt any great apprehension, after having discovered the favoring spur of rock, in connection with the stampeding herd that were coming at frantic speed up the gorge; but he felt assured that some outlaw gang were speeding fast after the animals.

The two assassins, he decided, belonged to this band, and had left, with the knowledge of the others, for the purpose of slaying him, and securing his horse, money, and effects. His revolver-shots had warned the gang that the attempted assassination had not been accomplished as proposed—that the intended victim had been alarmed, thus necessitating the use of firearms.

The outlaws would not know that their comrades had met death, until they reached the point of the fight. Then, after the stampeding herd had trampled the corpses, the mangled remains would be discovered in the bright moonlight, and a murderous thirst for revenge would be awakened in the breasts of the comrades of the slain.

If the outlaws had seen him as he approached the range, Blanco Bill reasoned, they had of course taken notice of his remarkably magnificent steed, and would know at once, by an examination of the pines, that he had escaped them.

The horse and himself would be missing.

They would know that he had escaped up the gorge, as it would have been impossible for him to have made his way out upon the plain, or up or down the base of the range on horseback without being observed; as the advance of the outlaws, and the stampede followed immediately after the reports of the revolvers.

In consequence of this, the outlaws must either be with the herd, or else had halted to examine the vicinity of his camp. If the latter, they would undoubtedly soon follow the herd; and, if any of them were acquainted with the gorge, they would know that they had him in their power. In any event, Blanco Bill knew that he was in a most dangerous predicament, from which he saw no favorable way of extricating himself.

But his thoughts were busy.

He resolved that, if assailed by numbers, as he had good reasons for believing he would be, he would sell his life dearly, that more than one of the outlaws should bite the dust before his revolvers.

His mind being thus occupied, he awaited the progress of events—the presence of the herd of horses, with, and under the control of the lawless men, being to him a mystery.

Nearer and nearer came the sounds of the stampede, until the young Texan could distinctly hear the wild snorts of the animals, and the screams of agony from some, as they were crowded, in the mad mob, against the rough walls of the gorge. There was no mistake in regard to the herd being greatly terrified, and beyond all control of man.

Only a few moments passed, and then the leaders of the herd were discovered by Bill, who bent forward, and gazed around the rocky spur, that promised him and his steed safety from the stampede. Black Hawk's ears were pricked forward, his head held high, and his eyes protruding; but the assuring words and affectionate caresses of his master kept the animal from further manifestations of alarm.

Blanco Bill saw at once that the horses, which composed the stampeding herd, were animals that had had free range on the plains. Some of them bore saddle-marks, and nearly all were marked and branded; but he knew that those which had been held under the service of man, and then allowed free range for any length of time, were wilder than the average mustangs;

that had never felt the rope, or the hand of man upon them.

It was a fearful sight in the dim light of the gorge, to behold that vast mass of snorting, wild-eyed, and foam-flecked beasts, dashing headlong toward the head of the gorge, where that towering wall of rock would meet them!

The Mustang Monarch realized on the instant, that the fright of the animals had partially been dissipated, and also that they were greatly fatigued, and might be stopped, or their speed lessened to such an extent as to prevent many of them from being injured, or killed by those in the rear forcing them against the rocks.

The last of the herd becoming visible, and none of the outlaws being in view, Blanco Bill at once urged Black Hawk out from behind the spur of rock, and caused the horse to gallop back and forth across the gorge; thus attracting the attention of the leaders of the stampede, and causing them to lessen speed. In fact, as it proved, gradually causing the leaders to hold back against the animals in their rear, only, however, to be again forced forward; and Blanco Bill, to save himself and Black Hawk, was forced to hasten to his former position, behind the spur of rock.

The next moment, with snorts and shrieks, on, like an avalanche, dashed the frenzied herd of horses; some being crushed to death against the wall of rock at the head of the gorge.

Checked thus, the others, the main portion of the herd, became a vast whirlpool of brutes; affrighted doubly by the sounds from the maimed horses at the base of the bluff.

Not until that moment, did a plan occur to the young Texan, and one which he at once put in operation.

With encouraging words, he urged his noble black steed into the whirlpool of frenzied brutes; and, when within the middle of the mass, he gave utterance to a series of whoops and yells, that would have caused a Comanche to envy him. The result was immediate, and as he had desired.

The outer animals of the herd, on the side opposite to the head wall, at once bounded on the back trail, down the gorge, from whence they had come. They were quickly followed by the others; and, in a few moments the "Mustang Monarch" really seemed a most appropriate title for the young man. For, mounted upon his superb steed, he dashed headlong down the gorge, surrounded by the terrified herd; all going at terrific speed on a wild stampede, that no body of men could have stopped, without loss of life.

Looming up, above this mob of snorting steeds, was Black Hawk; while, yet higher was the proud and dauntless form of the Texan hero.

It was an easy matter for Black Hawk to keep at even speed with the mad herd, and there was little danger of his being injured. Blanco Bill no sooner gained the position described, than he drew his revolvers, and with one of these in each hand—having cast the bridle-reins over his saddle-horn—he kept a keen lookout ahead, expecting each moment to see enemies approaching.

Nor was he mistaken; for, not half the distance between the head of the entrance to the gorge was passed, when, on ahead of the stampede, he perceived nearly a score of horsemen, fast galloping up the huge chasm.

But they instantly halted, upon discovering the avalanche of animals, dashing headlong, in an irresistible mass, down upon them. They instantly whirled their horses about, and sped as if for life—as, indeed, it was—toward the entrance of the gorge; all gazing over their shoulders, in evident amazement, at beholding the strange sight in their rear.

Blanco Bill had gained a sufficiently near view, to enable him to see that his suspicions had been correct; for he decided, from appearances, that the band of men ahead were a murderous party of bandits, nearly all Mexicans, and that the pair whom he had slain belonged to them. Yet, not a suspicion did he entertain, in regard to any of the band holding animosity toward himself; indeed, such an idea would have seemed preposterous, had any one advanced it.

Had he been near enough to have recognized Señor Ronaldino Christobal, or Capitan Christobal, as he was now known to his cut-throat followers, Blanco Bill would at once have understood the situation; yet, it would have seemed improbable that the Peruvian had followed him such a distance, to avenge his exposure of him as a fraud.

However, there is no doubt that Bill would—knowing the vindictive character of the Spanish-Americans—have realized that he was in a much more perilous position than that in which he really did believe himself to be, as matters existed. That he had little chance to escape with life, he was confident; but this he judged, knowing that the outlaws would risk much to avenge their slain comrades.

He resolved that he would keep within the stampeding herd, which, having before dashed through the pines, had no doubt cleared a way through which he could pass with safety.

The outlaws would undoubtedly halt, when clear of the pines; and endeavor, by stationing

themselves at one side of the track of the stampede, to shoot him from his horse.

Then would be the time of peril.

Should his horse be badly wounded, or killed, he would, upon the fall of the animal, be trampled into a shapeless mass.

Could he pass the ambush, which he believed the outlaws would form, he felt by turning the herd up the range, he might escape; for, he had learned at San Miguel of the recent locating of the new burg, Last Lay-out, which, he was aware, could be but a little distance north from the entrance of the gorge.

But little time had he for planning.

Indeed, there was no need for it; for the only way out of his peril, was to dash up the range.

He did not think it prudent, however, to do this; for he reasoned that probably the outlaws would judge such to be his intention, and some of the band would speed at once up the range, and by secreting themselves in some thicket, gain an opportunity of shooting him as he passed.

This last probability occurred to Blanco Bill, as the leaders of the wild herd darted into the pines. Bending low, and glancing ahead the young man dashed safely through; but a number of the frantic horses were crushed against the tree-trunks, and fell, with the sound of crashing bones, and shrill screams, to the earth. Then, the little life that remained in them was trampled out by the fast flying, merciless hoofs of those that dashed along in the rear.

In place of regaining his upright position in the saddle, Blanco Bill, with his heel partially supporting his weight, by being braced over the cantle of his saddle—held thus by a pressure on the end of his roll of blankets on the opposite side from that upon which he hung—and keeping his left foot in the stirrup; thus, Comanche-like, he remained while in the pines, his right hand clutching the mane of his horse, and his left a revolver.

Almost entirely concealed from any of his foes, who might be on either side of him, thus on the young Texan rode, into the clear moonlight, and clear of gorge and pines. But not ten bounds had Black Hawk made, after clearing the belt of pines, when Blanco Bill congratulated himself, not only upon having maintained his position, but from the fact that a sweeping glance had revealed to him the whole outlaw gang! Of this he was confident.

They were all, providentially, upon his right, seated in their saddles; their horses in a line, and their revolvers leveled at him.

Upon the instant the young man made this discovery, the weapons of the bandits belched fire and lead; and, with shrill screams, many of the horses of the herd, between his position and that of his enemies, fell to the earth in the spasms of death. At the same moment every one of the outlaw band drove spurs, evidently with the intention of dashing through the thinned ranks of the stampede, and capturing the Mustang Monarch.

From this movement and the fact that not a bullet had cut the air over or near him and his horse, Blanco Bill began to perceive that their intention, for some reason or other, was to take him alive.

He could see that they were all of the most ruffianly aspect; and, had not Señor Ronaldino Christobal pulled low his sombrero, the young Texan would have recognized him. Had he done so, a portion of the mystery that puzzled him would have been made clear and plain.

But the very acts and movements of the bandits proved to be the salvation of the Mustang Monarch; for, the volley from their revolvers increased the fright of the animals; and the dash of the outlaws from the south, together with the loud explosion, caused the stampede to be turned toward the north. Directly up and along the base of the range the affrighted beasts rushed; and just clear of the scattered bowlders, and the "wash-outs" that had been caused by mountain torrents in the time of heavy rains.

No sooner was this turn made than the gap caused by the shooting of some of the herd closed up; and Blanco Bill quickly regained his position in his saddle, gave utterance to the most fearful yells, to increase the speed of the herd, and insure the continuation of the stampede.

This was, now, his only hope of evading capture.

He also turned partly in his saddle and opened fire on the outlaws who were spurring and lashing their mustangs on, in the rear of the fast-flying herd.

Several shots were returned, the bullets whistling quite near the young Texan; when, to his great amazement, he beheld one of the outlaws, who appeared to be the chief, gallop madly among his followers, gesticulating wildly, and evidently ordering them not to shoot. And this, although he must have known that Blanco Bill had wounded several of the band; one having been seen to fall over the hams of his horse upon the plain, apparently shot through a vital part.

Not another revolver was fired at him.

Here, then, was another mystery.

Who, in the name of wonder, was the chief of

the outlaws? And why did he prevent his men from firing?

Why did the bandit leader wish to capture him?

Why had he sent the two assassins to slay him, and now was preventing his followers from shooting?

What object could the outlaw chief have in wishing to secure his person?

These were mental questions, which Blanco Bill could not, for his life, answer.

It was all strange—most mysteriously so.

But, as he saw that he had now a very good chance open for escape, our young friend bent all his energy and strength in the effort to keep up the headlong flight of the herd; knowing that every bound took him nearer to safety.

And thus on, in the midst of the maddened herd of horses—on, toward Last Lay-out—rode the Mustang Monarch; pursued by a horde of merciless marauders, who were in the employ, and under the leadership—although Blanco Bill did not dream of such a thing—of Ronaldino Christobal, the disgraced and humiliated Champion Horse Educator of South America!

This baffled villain was now furiously frantic to capture his rival, and extort from him by torture his strange secret of fascinating, and bending to his will, the wildest specimens of the equine family!

On, and still on, over the moonlit plain, and up along the base of the Rocky Mountains, toward Last Lay-out, bounded Blanco Bill—riding, for life and liberty, upon his noble black steed, Black Hawk, amid the wild stampede!

CHAPTER IX.

AN EXCITING CIRCUS.

PROBABLY but few of the female sex, or at least of those among them who had been reared in civilization, could have retained their senses, had they been placed in the position of Katie Jordan, confronted by an Apache brave!

But the young girl did not faint.

She sat in her saddle as if paralyzed.

The manner of the Indian was exultant and confident. Undoubtedly he felt positive that there were no whites in the vicinity. That the maiden was completely in his power, she herself realized; more from the manner of the savage than from any reasoning of her own, for of that she was incapable. But she took in, at a glance, the entire situation.

She remained motionless, moving not a muscle, but maintaining that steady stare of fright and horror. The Apache appeared in no hurry to bring matters to a crisis; for he was aware that he was inflicting upon the maiden, the most poignant mental torture, and this was sweet to his fiendish nature.

Like a panther, crouched for the spring, and within plain view and near to a helpless fawn that was powerless from terror—so the hideous painted brave, holding the jaw-strap of his half-wild steed stiff as a bar of iron, remained; his steady gaze fixed, in a horribly fascinating stare, into the eyes of the fair girl, curdling the very blood in her veins!

Katie dared not move.

She feared even to shriek out.

Even did she make the attempt, she felt positive that no sound would escape her lips.

Her breath came in gasps.

It seemed like some horrible nightmare. She almost disbelieved her own senses, feeling that the appalling sight before her existed only in her imagination. Her brain was as if seething in flames, and she felt that she must become insane, did she not give vent to her dread emotions, or exert herself in an attempt to escape.

Suddenly there came a resolution into the mind of Kathleen Jordan. Her natural daring, and strength of will, partly asserted themselves.

But it came too late, for the savage read what was in her mind. His burning gaze noticed the change, and he knew that she thought of escape. He had no fears in regard to a rescue, but had enjoyed the situation hugely, in his own way.

This, however, must end.

He would bind and gag his lovely captive, and then speed away.

Thus reasoned the Apache spy, and he lost no time; but, with a yell of triumph, dashed forward on his mustang.

The scene that followed was truly terrible.

By this time, the silver moon ruled the heavens, and the whole western world.

At the very instant after the yell of the Indian was heard, a spurt of fire shot from the willows, followed by a deafening explosion.

The Apache, with a horrible death-yell, threw up his arms in the air, his flaunting feathers quivering, and then sunk backward; falling, at the next bound of his startled steed, over the animal's hams to the sward.

Away dashed the half-wild mustang, at frantic speed, toward the plain; fairly leaping over the back of the little burro.

As the savage shot out the last sound that was ever to leave his brutal lips, his frightfully-contorted face and glance of fiendish meaning were bent upon Katie, who believed that the Indian was then about to inclose her in his up-raised arms. Then, at last, she gave vent to her dread and horror, in a piercing cry, which

broke the echoes of the death-yell of the savage amid the peaks above!

As that shriek left the pallid lips of the maiden, she slid from her saddle, with the dew-laden grass and flowers; while Calico, disdaining to flee, stood beside his senseless mistress, with starting eyes fixed upon the corpse of the Apache, which lay extended but a few feet from the unconscious girl.

The cry of his mistress seemed to have struck Texas as something worthy of notice and investigation: for the burro jerked up his head, shook his loosely hung ears, and walked up in a listless manner to the side of Calico, putting his muzzle down, close to the dress of his mistress. He then half-closed his eyes, as if intimating to the "pinto" that he was about to take a snooze, and would be on hand if there were any more startling events on the programme for the night.

The dead Apache lay, in all his hideousness, almost side by side with the beautiful maiden, whom the Fates, at the last moment, had snatched from a doom worse than death, and hurled her would-have-been destroyer into the great unknown hereafter!

No stranger or more impressive scene could well have been imagined than the tableau there presented. All was still as death itself, in that little cove in the rocky range; for neither Calico nor Texas moved a step.

And yet, although some person had shot the Apache dead, and thus saved the life of Katie Jordan, not a shout nor a word had broken the silence; nor had a human being appeared, to further aid the young girl, by endeavoring to recover her from her faint.

This appeared strange.

Why had not the concealed marksman shown himself?

This was a mystery, but a mystery easy to solve, had any one been there at the time; for, advancing to the willows, and peeping within the screen of branches, one might have beheld a sight that would have explained the non-appearance of the man who had fired the shot so opportunely. The weapon, as any one who heard the report of the same, had been greatly overloaded. The man, who had fired it, lay outstretched, as part of the result.

He was a very small, and dried-up specimen of humanity, with strongly-marked Hibernian features.

Fully sixty years of age he must have been. His hair was gray, short, and curly; while his thin cheeks and chin were covered with a bristly beard, of more than a week's growth. For all that, there were marks upon his face which indicated great firmness of character, will, and fearless bravery.

Nor were there marks lacking which explained his non-appearance; for quite a large swelling was to be seen upon one side of his head, and his right temple was torn and bruised. His features, where not blood-stained, were ghastly as death itself.

Knowing that the poor wanderer had lost her protector, we judge that the prostrate Irishman was none other than the missing Teddy McCarthy. And he, indeed, it was.

The reason he had not responded to the repeated calls of Katie Jordan are obvious, when we consider that by so doing he would have betrayed his presence to the Indian.

While within the pines, in quest of game, the old Irishman was dumfounded, and filled with the greatest apprehension for the safety of his much-loved charge, by discovering, a little distance in front of him, the Apache brave, who was proceeding down the range with great caution; at times seeking a position from which he could gain a view of the white-squaw.

Inexperienced in border life, and even in the use of firearms, was Teddy; but he swore by all the saints that no harm should come to Miss Katie, until he lay dead through defending her. Not daring to follow the savage upon horseback, as the click of the iron-shod hoofs might in some unguarded moment betray him, Teddy McCarthy dismounted, and secured the animal in a *motte*. Then clutching his double-barreled shot-gun, he glided on after the war-painted Apache.

It grieved him greatly when he heard the anxious and apprehensive outcries of Katie, as the latter called to him, and he was forced to remain silent. He knew that his prolonged and unaccountable absence must be giving her great uneasiness of mind.

Teddy had never before seen a hostile Indian, and the sight of this war-painted Apache was anything but a pleasant vision to him. But he prayed most fervently, and vowed that he would save Katie, even should Satan himself favor the red-skin.

On he stole, the shadows darkening meanwhile, when he suddenly became impressed with the thought that he was in no way a match for the Apache, when it should come to a passage of arms. At close quarters the Indian could pick him up, and choke him, as if he were a sick chicken.

Teddy McCarthy decided that the only way open to possible success was to steal upon the savage from covert, and shoot him down.

He knew himself to be a poor marksman, consequently he must get quite near to the Apache

before taking aim. He also recalled the fact that his weapon might not be heavily enough loaded to kill the brave, even did he make a good shot.

Teddy quickly halted, after thus considering, and jerking out the ramrod of his gun, adjusted the wormer, and strove to draw the charges, resolving to substitute bullets such as he used in his revolver, in place of the buckshot with which the piece was loaded.

In his excitement, he broke short off at the wood-work the wormer, and the brass heel of the same, both of which remained in the gun.

"Thunder an' turf!" he muttered, in vexation; "sure the devil's to pay now, an' no pitch hot. What'll I do, be gorra? Sure I have it. I'll put in another load o' powder, an' some big bullets; an' thin if I don't fetch the red haythen, I'll ate grass wid the jackass the rist o' my life!"

And the Irishman suited the action to the word.

He was quite near to the savage, when the latter entered the willows, and awaited the coming of his intended captive. The old man suffered tortures, when he saw the terrible agonies of Katie, when the Indian revealed himself. When he perceived that the life of the young girl depended upon him, he took hasty aim, and pulled trigger.

Teddy did not press the gun tightly to his shoulder, or the consequences might not have been so serious. As it was, however, the breech of the weapon flew back with great force, upon exploding, and knocked the unfortunate Irishman senseless; the poor old fellow knowing nothing of the success of his shot, except that from his own end of the gun.

Even that was only for a single moment of consciousness, which was banished as instantly, when he was hurled into the regions of chaos.

CHAPTER X.

RETURNING TO LIFE AND HOPE.

THE scene in the little glade at the foot of the towering range of adamantine rock, remained for some little length of time as last described. And, impressive enough it was; made still more so by the attitude of the two faithful animals, Calico and the comical Texas, who stood beside their senseless mistress.

The patient *burro*, with the pack still upon its back, still maintained the same position; its huge ears and muzzle resting lightly upon the skirt of the maiden's dress, and its eyes closed. The noble horse stood as at the first, but its head was in almost continuous motion, and its large lustrous eyes were distended, giving quick, sweeping, and suspicious glances upon every side, and up the dark precipitous range.

It was a scene that suggested death, and with it brute faithfulness and affection, such as is seldom known, and hardly to be believed; for, although the animals had both betrayed a strong desire to slake their thirst at the spring, neither of them now left the side of their mistress.

For some time, this remained unchanged; then, with a low moan, Katie Jordan drew her hand over her brow, and opened her eyes.

Directly overhead, the silver moon rode majestically amid the twinkling stars, through an ocean of azure, which the dark peaks of the Rockies seemed from her position to pierce.

Had not the faithful Calico and Texas been close at hand, indeed so near that she could hear their breathing, the young girl would have been at a loss to understand her condition, or what had occurred; indeed, she would not, for the moment have known where she was. But the sight of the two animals recalled the near past, in all its dread signification; the picture of the Apache, with agony contorted face, so awful in its war-paint—the dead brave, with uplifted hands, in one of which was still held a murderous knife—all this was indelibly photographed upon the mind of Katie Jordan, for life.

And, through life, that horrible death-yell would ring in her ears.

As the past came up before her, the maiden sprang to a sitting posture; pressing her hands to her temples, and crying out, from her inmost soul:

"Oh God, protect me!"

Then she naturally gazed keenly around.

One sweeping glance, in a circle upon the rough rocks and dark shades, and then up the mountain-side, where shaded points, and seams, and clefts, were black as ink, she gave; but no moving object met her vision.

She started to her feet, clasping her arms about her horse's neck; the animal manifesting strong delight, and rubbing his muzzle most affectionately against Katie's shoulder.

Texas tossed up his head, as his mistress arose to her feet, and gazed almost stupidly upon her. Then straightening, or stretching, one hind leg after the other, straight outward, at the same time shaking his head with evident surprise and indignation, upon discovering that the heavy pack still remained upon his back, the burro walked straight to the spring.

There, having drank with great gusto, it returned, and stood gazing at Katie, as if wondering what had been the occasion of his having been so neglected.

Not until that moment, had the maiden really recovered and composed her mind sufficiently to

reason upon her strange and helpless position, as well as the probable dangers that surrounded her. Her first act was characteristic of her.

She quickly stepped to the side of Texas, and unbuckling crupper and girth, she then, by the exertion of her whole strength, succeeded in throwing the pack off from the animal.

Katie then unloosened the girth of her saddle, but did not remove it from Calico, and then slipped the bridle, hanging it upon the horn of the saddle. This relieved the faithful steed, which immediately proceeded to drink at the spring; Katie following, as if she dreaded to have the beast—her only friend in those vast wild solitudes—absent a moment from her side.

She feared to break the awful stillness that surrounded her, and filled her with awe, and superstitious imaginings; for no human being is entirely free from superstition, and the situation of the poor girl was calculated to awaken all the emotions of this character that were in her nature.

It was a matter of the greatest wonder to Katie Jordan that she, upon returning to consciousness, had not found herself in the power of the horrible savage who was bounding toward her when last she was capable of sense and reason.

Her gaze had been frozen upon the terribly-painted face and black, serpent-like eyes, held thus by the attraction of repulsion, horror and dread; and although she had noticed a flash of fire and heard the loud explosion, she knew not that the Indian had been shot at the very moment he threw up his arms and gave that blood-curdling yell.

Consequently, Katie was dumfounded upon finding herself free and the Apache vanished from view.

Even when she had attended to the animals, the position of the young girl prevented her from perceiving the corpse of the brave.

But upon leaving the near vicinity of the spring with Calico after the horse had drank—she scanning the little glade to ascertain the most favorable point at which to stake her four-footed friend—then the maiden suddenly halted, uttered a piercing shriek, and cried out in her horror:

"Oh, Heavenly Father, protect me!"

She, at first sight, believed the Apache to be alive, and that he lay there confident that she, his intended victim, could not escape him.

Her horse, although well aware of the position of the corpse, snorted wildly in sympathy with his mistress, who clung to his neck as if trusting to him for protection.

Soon, however, Katie recovered from her terrible fright, and realized that the savage was dead.

No longer was her safety a mystery.

She recalled the flash and the explosion, and knew that the Indian had been shot, and that thus she had been saved from a horrible fate.

But who could have fired that most providential shot?

Who, if not Teddy McCarthy?

Certainly no other friend was in the vicinity. But, if it had been Teddy, where was he now?

He must certainly have heard her frequent and urgent calls to him, and he had made no reply, and was still among the missing.

All this was strange, inexplicably so; yet, as Katie pondered, it occurred to her that Teddy must have been following the savage, and had been afraid to make an outcry, as that would betray his presence to the lurking Apache.

But then, why had he not come to her after he had shot the red-man?

This was a question that both puzzled and pained her.

Soon, however, she recalled the fact that the flash had been from the willows near the spring; indeed, it had proceeded from the very point at which the savage had first appeared.

As Katie remembered this, she also had brought to her mind the recollection that the report she had heard was much too loud to be an ordinary gun-shot. To her it had sounded terrific.

This was also puzzling; but when the young girl meditated further, she began to think that as Teddy was armed with a double-barreled gun, he had probably pulled both triggers at the same time. This would account for the loudness of the report, but not for the old man's absence; or, if it had not been McCarthy, of the person who had arrived so opportunely on the spot.

Certainly, Katie reasoned, no one who had thus acted would remain in hiding, but have hastened at once to her side; unless, indeed, he had been wounded, and was incapable of so doing.

No sooner did this thought occur to her, than she became greatly distressed; for again rushed with prostrating force upon her mind the thought that possibly Teddy was dead! Remorse for having been the direct means of leading her old friend out upon the border and to his death, now tortured the poor girl, and she stepped slowly toward the willows, drawing her revolver as she went.

Soon she reached the outermost branches, and clutching the same, quickly drew them as dead and peered within.

It would have been agonizing to a beholder to

have witnessed the anguish that was stamped upon the face of Katie Jordan at that moment. At her feet lay the poor old man, who had constituted himself her protector in her wild wanderings in search of her brother.

Yes, there lay Teddy McCarthy, apparently dead, his attenuated form outstretched, and his face the pallor of death.

His gun lay beside him, proving that it had indeed been he who had fired the providential shot that had saved her from so dread a fate.

The sight was a terrible one, and, with a wild cry, the poor girl sprung forward, sinking upon her knees beside the deathlike form of the old man, and placing her hand over his heart.

Then, in the most intense relief, joy and thankfulness, Katie Jordan cried out:

"Oh, thank God!"

Tears flowed freely, relieving the maiden's overtaxed brain, as she lowered her fair head upon Teddy's breast and sobbed convulsively:

CHAPTER XI.

MARCHING ON.

NOT many moments did Katie Jordan allow her anguish to rule her, to the exclusion of her duty to Teddy McCarthy.

She knew that life remained in him, that the old man had been stunned by a heavy blow; and this was another enigma, seeming to indicate that the Indian who had been slain must have a confederate, and that the latter had felled Teddy, a moment after the old man had felled.

But, if so, why had not the savage made sure of his murderous work? And why had he not captured her, and the animals?

Perhaps he had gone for assistance, for some of his savage companions.

This possibility served to hasten the movements of the young girl, and she procured some water from the spring, with which she proceeded to bathe the bruised head of her old friend.

Ever since she had discovered Teddy, and formed the conclusions recorded, Katie Jordan had been in a most torturing state of apprehension. She feared that some horrible savage would spring upon her, from the dark shades, at any moment; and she continuously shot glances of suspicion in every direction, keeping her revolver ready for use, determined to shoot the first Indian who made his appearance. But she detected no indication of the presence of any red foe. Indeed, all was still in the little glade, no sound meeting her ears except those made by the horse and burro, as they cropped the rich grass from the sod.

Katie, however, was not fated to suffer thus in her mind very long.

Again was she to enjoy the companionship of her old friend, and listen to his voice.

But a short time had she waited in suspense, when Teddy gave a heavy groan, and threw up one of his hands to his bruised temple, which evidently gave him considerable pain.

Then he moved about uneasily.

"Thank Heaven, Teddy McCarthy, that you live!" cried out the young girl, with joy and deep feeling. "I feared that I should never again hear your voice—that you had lost your life in my defense! If you had been killed, I should never have forgiven myself."

"Speak to me, Teddy, and tell me how you came to be in this sad state?"

The old man struggled to a sitting posture, with Katie's assistance, and then held out one hand, placing it in a caressing manner on her shoulder, as he replied:

"God help us, Kathleen mavourneen! Is it yersilf, then, or is it yer ghost? What in the divil is the matter wid me hid? Upon me sowl, it feels es though I'd got a whack from every shtick at the closin' day o' Donnybrook Fair!"

"Who shtruck me, is it? Faith, an' I'd like mighty well till know that mesilf! Howld on a bit, till I get me idays a-runnin'."

"Oh, Teddy, do come away from this horrible place! I think we are still in great danger. Do you not remember shooting the Indian, when the terrible savage was about to seize me?"

"I think there must have been another one, crouching in the willows, and that he felled you to the earth after you had shot his comrade. Do come away, Teddy!"

"Aisy, darlint! I have it all clear now. Be the great Bog of Allen, but I made a fool o' mesilf entirely. Faith, there was but wan o' the red divils. Sure, I got me two eyes fixed an him, only a bit afther I left yees; an' I followed the haythen, knowin' he'd be afther git-tin' the best of us, if I didn't put me best fut for'ard, an' put in a shot that 'u'd lay him low."

"But, upon me sowl, I was laid low mesilf; for it was a double dose o' powder that I put intill the gun, to say nothin' o' the handful o' bullets. An' sure, whin I pulled thrigger, I thought the worruld had bu'sted intoirely!"

"Me hid's in a fix, be jabers! But I know I hit the red sarpint, or it's yersilf I w'u'dn't be afther luckin' at now forninst me. I'm wid ye, Miss Katie! We'll lave this immajitly."

"It's a wild place it is, the Lord knows, an' there moight be more o' the scalpin' divils not far beyant. May the divil fly away wid me, if I laves ye ag'in—d'ye moind that?"

"Oh, Teddy! I am so glad it was not another

Indian who attacked you. You must have been greatly excited, and so overloaded your gun, which kicked you badly! Where is your horse? We must travel on, until we reach that new mining-town."

"I could not close an eye to-night, if we encamped anywhere this side of Last Lay-out. But, I fear, we shall hear nothing of Patsey, even there."

"Well, thin, Miss Katie, I don't bel'ave we'll find Patsey, at all, at all; but I'll go wid yees all the same, as long as Calico can shake a hoof, or I kin stand straight in me brogues."

"But, be cripes, it's a luck at the corpse I must have wid all the strin'th o' me two eyes, to take some o' the pain out o' me hid. Upon me sowl, I'll say it to the fore, I niver got sich a whack in me life; though it's Teddy McCarthy that has swung a stick wid the best o' the b'ys, from Watherford till Cork, an' back, at all the fairs!"

Katie was very impatient to be going, but she well knew that the Irishman would rattle his tongue, even though he knew that danger threatened. She perceived that the brain of the old man had received a great shock, for he acted and talked strangely, and his voice sounded unnatural.

While bringing his remarks to a close, Teddy succeeded in gaining his feet; when he rubbed his stiffened joints, and picked up his gun, which he examined carefully, saying:

"Be the powers o' Moll Kelly, but that's a foine gun! Sure, Miss Katie, if ye load it heavy enough, it'll kill at both ends. Lade on, alanna! I'm ready to cut, shuffle, or dale wid every painted divil that lucks crass-eyed at yees."

"I hope and pray we shall see no more of the horrible savages," returned the maiden, as she led the way into the glade; while Teddy followed slowly and stiffly, his eyes scanning the sward ahead.

"It is yonder," said Katie, pointing toward the corpse. "I would not look at the dreadful thing again for the world!"

"Faith, thin, mavourneen, I don't wondher. But yees must kape cool, an' struggle ag'in' wakeness in this divil of a country. I'll be wid ye in a moment. Och!"

McCarthy just then perceived the dead Apache brave.

"God be betune us an' all harrum! Thru for ye, astore; it's a sight till make any one shiver, barrin' it's the divil himself, bad cess till him. Well, well; I've seen enough, an' I've said enough. Sorra wan word more has ould Teddy till spake, till we're afther lavin' this God-for-saken spot behind us!"

McCarthy hastened, with a wild look in his eyes, to the side of the burro, catching one of its long ears, and leading it to the pack; Texas holding back, evidently surprised and indignant at the proceedings.

"The divil a word now, Taxes! Hould yer tongue, an' for the love o' God don't be afther givin' one o' thim thunderin' squeels o' yours, or ye'll have all the red divils in the country afther us!"

Katie Jordan had tripped, as expeditiously as was possible, to the side of her horse, when she adjusted the bridle, tightened the saddle-girth, and mounted. She kept constantly gazing around her, being little less fearful of the appearance of more Indians, than before she understood what had caused Teddy McCarthy's unconsciousness.

The latter quickly emptied the pack of the heavier articles, and buckling on the burro the pack-saddle, cast the huge bags over it; and, in a short time, had the animal fully equipped. Then, with a gesture, he beckoned Katie to ride forward; when, in a low voice, he said:

"Never will I laves yees again, miss; but it's out o' this we must be afther gettin'. Sure, no dacint gossoon w'u'd think o' slavin' nigh the corpse o' that haythin!"

"But, it's his knife, an' the rist o' his thraps I'll have, if me blood runs cowlid while I'm gettin' that same. God stan' betune me an' all harrum!"

Teddy strode to the side of the dead Apache, quickly tearing the war gear from the same, and running back with such a horror-stricken and pallid face, that Katie could not suppress a light laugh; notwithstanding she had so recently been terrified nearly to death, and passed through such a dreadful ordeal.

The old man looked at her in holy horror, actually entertaining the opinion that she had gone hopelessly mad; a thought which caused him to decide in favor of hastening on, as fast as possible, to Last Lay-out.

But, first, he must recover his horse.

"Don't mind me, Teddy," said the young girl, as she detected his scared expression, and read the old man's mind; "I am hysterical, I believe, and it is little wonder, after the fearful occurrences of this night."

"May Heaven protect us from any more such dangers!"

"Faith, an' I say that same, mesilf! May the good Lord look till us. But, it's ready I'll soon be, an' thin it's Teddy McCarthy that'll make the craythurs fly. It's me horse that I want nixt."

"Bad luck till the Injuns, I say! Sure, it's thankin' St. Pathrick I am, that the divil a wan o' them, or a snake aither, there, is in Ould Ireland, from Cape Clear till the Giant's Causeway!"

Thus muttered McCarthy, as he trudged along, up the range, keeping a safe distance from the borders of the mottes and thickets, as well as from the bowlders; the patient and ridiculous looking burro following, at listless gait, its long ears flapping, and its eyes half-closed. Texas had evidently resolved to take matters resignedly.

Calico followed, with his young mistress, prancing proudly along; while the maiden continued to cast sweeping and suspicious glances on all sides.

Teddy, as he proceeded, neglected not to "feed" his gun; and, with such liberality, notwithstanding his recent impressive warning, as to promise him a broken head when he next pressed trigger.

But the good Irishman doubtless considered a broken head a decidedly secondary consideration, where Katie's safety was concerned; indeed, his proceedings in the handling of ammunition proved this.

Soon the old man discovered his horse—the animal being safe at the point where he had left it—and mounting, the little party proceeded some distance out on the moonlit plain. They then sped down the range, but not at such a gait as to leave Texas far in their rear; the burro, to the indignation and apprehension of old Teddy, giving vent to its disapproval of this night travel and continued excitement, by a far-reaching, piercing, and prolonged squeal, the like of which could only emanate from a steam-whistle, or a jackass.

CHAPTER XII.

LIVELY TIMES IN LAST LAY-OUT.

WE were forced, it will be remembered, to leave the new and promising burg, on the eve of a general celebration. Had a stranger, unaccustomed to life in any of the mining-towns, entered Last Lay-out on this, to the citizens, eventful and propitious night, shortly after the moon arose, he would very possibly have concluded that he had "struck" a town, the population of which was made up entirely of lunatics.

Benzine Bazaar had done a rushing business for some three hours; and now, at nine P.M., there were few men in the burg who were not well "primed," even to the extent of each one's actually believing himself to be a member of the company that owned "Grizzly Gulch Bonanza"—if, indeed, he did not consider himself the sole owner. At any rate, there was not one present who did not feel equal to the task of "settin' 'em up," for as many as could crawl in double line along the bar of Alamo Abe.

At times, however, it so happened that the man who pompously ordered the drinks did not have the necessary "two bits," to pay for his own glass; but a sly wink at Abe "fixed ther biz," for the landlord knew better than to raise a rumpus, or insult one of his lordly customers, by refusing to entertain any thoughts favorable to the credit system.

From the manner in which the night had opened, one who had taken his stand in Benzine Bazaar, would have concluded, without much difficulty, that if Alamo Abe was not one of the owners of the "Bonanza" up the gulch, he had a much better thing of it—that his gold was "bagged," without the trouble of waiting for the quartz to be crushed.

A sober observer would also have decided, that if the "forty-rod beverage" continued to flow down the throats of the celebrators until midnight, the new "stiff-yard" would be broken by more mounds than those beneath which reposed, in their last sleep, the pair of unfortunate Celestials.

Alamo Abe had been the originator of the celebration; and no sooner had he decided, from the very evident favor his proposal met with, to make a night of it, than he interviewed privately each one of the "card-sharps," and induced them to join in the festivities for that particular night, and refrain from "flipping paste-board" until the following day—promising two weeks' table-rent free to each, in consideration. Thus Abe insured himself against any competition, in the gambling line.

Confident that Benzine Bazaar would be crowded to suffocation, the Texan caused the tables to be removed to the large room in the rear, the wide plank door between being left open, as was also the outer one. From this last, one could gain a view up the gulch that promised to enrich those who had staked claims therein.

Never were there collected a rougher and more boisterous set of men than filled the "Bazaar;" the blue and red-shirted miners predominating, although these garments were mostly ragged and soiled.

Flashily attired gamblers, wearing a profusion of "loud" jewelry, mingled with the crowd; and made themselves conspicuous and popular by treating any one who acco ted them. Range bummers were in their glory, and it truly appeared that the more ragged and dirty a man

was, the more claim he had to raise the mischief generally.

The din was simply deafening, and any miner entering would have known at once that he was among those of his own trade; for the boisterous conversation betrayed this fact—all the technical terms and slang of the mines being used from all sides of the room.

Up to nine o'clock, "chin" or "tongue-music" had universally ruled in Benzine Bazaar, and the words of no one had been of such a character as to call for anything of a sanguine color; yet, in many instances, the wrangling had led to the very jumping-off place, where peace ends and war begins. It needed but a slight "starter" to create the most uproarious excitement and change the assemblage to a roaring mob; and, although all were under the influence of liquor, they seemed to realize that bloodshed would follow the slightest personal difficulty. This might, at any time, occur; and all appeared to guard their tongues, except on general subjects, to which no one could with reason take exception.

This state of affairs, however, could not long continue.

The worst passions of humanity ruled each of the lawless class present and these had been brought to the front by indulgence in strong drink.

Being a new burg, the dangerous men were, as a general thing, unknown as such.

Even the most exemplary, orderly and law-abiding men of the place were eager for some diversion of an exciting nature; the pouring down of liquor, and the shouting and yelling, having become too tame and of long continuance to further interest or amuse them.

All at once it seemed to flash through the mind of some one in the crowd that Alamo Abe had an unusual quantity of his own merchandise on board and might therefore be easily persuaded to act a part which would without doubt put all present in a state of good humor. This would change the current of the thoughts and inclinations of those who, unable to bear so heavy a load of extra steam, might announce themselves as "spoiling for a fight."

If a "shooting and cutting bee" was once started, those who had nothing whatever to do with it would stand the best chance of getting hurt or laid out cold for good.

This thought had probably occurred to the individual who knew the weak point of the proprietor of the Benzine Bazaar and who now yelled:

"Speech! Speech by Alermo Abe, ther boss bullwhacker o' Texas, an' ther chief o' benzine slingers in New Mex'!"

Now Abe had never been known to make a public speech, but all well knew that he had great aspirations for public office—that he wished to be sheriff of the burg, and would undoubtedly be elected such if proposed as a candidate that very night. Many present believed that the landlord had proposed this "benzine-bee," principally with that view; knowing that the arrival of the mining machinery insured the success of the burg, as a burg, and consequently the new "locate" must have some recognized head.

The cheers which followed the call for a speech from Alamo Abe—though coming, for the most part, from "bummers" and impecunious miners—seemed to testify to the popularity of the Texan.

The giant form of the landlord arose behind the bar, as he dropped the demijohn he had been filling. The keen eye of Abe glittered with the extreme of satisfied pride and exultation, his features betraying mock surprise; for he had been impatiently waiting, knowing that he could depend upon certain ones, when half-drunk, to create an excitement favorable to his nomination and election.

Proudly erect stood Alamo Abe, glancing around upon the crowd to mark any man who might, by word or look, indicate that he was averse to the proposed speech.

But, from the fact that Abe was a giant in form and strength, besides being noted as a crack shot and expert knife-tosser, he was respected just as much as for his liberality as far as liquids were concerned, and if any one held enmity toward him, it was not manifested, even by a glance or a whisper. Indeed a second round of cheers threatened to take the roof off Benzine Bazaar, and caused Abe to jerk off his sombrero, and bow as gracefully as a bob-tailed mule when sending its "hinders" skyward in chase of a buffalo gnat.

Close after the last round of cheers, something like a hush fell upon the assemblage, when a ragged bum, who had taken in more than his share of whisky in the early part of the evening, and had fallen asleep regardless of the din, crawled from a barrel, awakened by the cheers, and gazing around with bloodshot eyes, cried out hoarsely:

"Why in thunderation didn't yer wake me up? Dog-gone ef I'm goin' ter be cheated out'n my votel I goes heavy, an' votes often fer Alermo Abe, es ther sheriff o' this hyer slam-up burg!"

The "bum" evidently supposed the election had come off during his siesta.

Much to the surprise and extreme gratification of the landlord, another voice sounded:

"I nomernates Alermo Abe fer Sheriff o' Last Lay-out!"

"Second ther motion!"

Then up sprung one of the best known "old-timers," and cried out—at the same time leveling two deadly six-shooters:

"Han's up fer Alermo Abe, es sheriff! An' ther fu'st galoot I friz my peepers onter what hain't gut his paws elevated, I'll sink a shaft inter his brain-box!"

It is almost needless to say that every man thrust up his hands much quicker than he would probably have done at the order of a road-agent gang, while all roared with laughter.

Had the "old-timer" made this movement and demand ten minutes before, he would no doubt have been riddled with bullets for his pains; but his way had been prepared, and a change in the thoughts of the crowd effected by the yells that preceded. Besides, at the very moment that the old fellow jumped upon the barrel, the men whom Abe had engaged to assist him for the night, at a signal from the latter, began to set glasses and bottles upon the bar in an expeditious manner, which meant a general "irrigate" for the crowd.

"Alermo Abe air 'lected Sheriff o' Last Lay-out!"

Thus yelled the "old-timer," returning his revolvers to their scabbards.

He then added:

"Abe, yer kin now sling in a leetle high-falutin' 'Nited States er Texas lingo, ter yer constiterants. Hit'll count 'bout now. We-uns don't want no sheriff what can't wabble his tongue, as well es cut, slash, shoot, an' tie a knot on a lariat!"

"'Rah fer Alermo Abe, ther sheriff o' last Lay-out!"

Such was the universal yell that followed.

"Feller-citz!" cried out Abe; "trot up, an' sardine yerselves 'long my bar, an' jist errigate yer in'ards with Alermo Abe! This air my treat, all 'roun', ef hit bu'sts me in ther way o' benzine."

"I'm 'bleeged ter yer all, fer ther honor yer hes showed; but ef I'm sheriff o' this hyer burg, hit must be a free 'lection, without weepins bein' mixed inter hit. Not thet I keers fer myself so much, but fer ther honor o' ther burg."

"Yer doesn't want loose pilgrims runnin' up an' down ther range, slingin' ther tongues 'bout ther citz o' Last Lay-out bein' forced ter vote fer Alermo Abe thet-a-way. I reckon my ole pard didn't look at both sides o' this hyer thing."

"We'll all h'ist our p'ison, an' then ef yer wants ter 'lect me on ther squar', why I'm yer persimmon, an' I'll do my leetle duty like a Texan. Thet's me! I'm sisy, from my huffs to my ha'r. I'll gi'n yer a speech, ef I kin scrouge out lingo enough o' ther right sort, arter yer hes drunk; an', should yer inclinate ag'in fer me es sheriff, in a XXX strait up an' down bonyfidy 'lection, I'm thar!"

The cheers and yells of approbation that followed this unexpected announcement were simply terrific.

All saw that they had laid themselves, and Abe as well, open to ridicule and sneers.

The decision of the sheriff-elect raised him a peg or two higher in the estimation of the "citz" of Last Lay-out.

Another vote was called for, with the same result, and without recourse to revolvers.

Alamo Abe was really elected this time, and again the cry rung, loud:

"Speech! Speech!"

Abe placed his horny hands upon the bar-slab, and then sprung upon the same, standing straight as a forest pine; his head just clearing the rough joists and slabs of the top of the room.

Instantly the vast assemblage, so recently a yelling mob, and near to frenzy and bloodshed, became perfectly silent.

One could almost hear a pin drop—the linchpin of a Government wagon, we mean, and not the diminutive article generally so designated—every eye being fastened upon Alamo Abe, the newly, and doubly, elected Sheriff of Last Lay-out.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MODEL SPEECH.

THE appearance of Alamo Abe, as he sprung upon the bar, was both comical and commanding.

Physically he was a superb specimen of humanity, but his long hair was wild and tangled, and his matted beard concealed only partially his large and sun-tanned neck; while his eyes, although bloodshot from drink, glittered with joyous good-humor, not unmixed with pride.

As he gained his position on the bar slab he stood an instant, striving to maintain the perpendicular, but it was in vain. His giant form swayed from side to side like a mountain pine shaken by changing currents of wind.

After the first wild cheer that welcomed the newly-elected sheriff a hush fell upon the assemblage. The act that followed was in keeping with Abe's character and breeding.

This was the tearing from his head of his huge sombrero, which he threw at his feet upon the

bar. The next instant he raised high his right leg, and stamped hard with his heavy boot upon the hat, crushing the same flat beneath it.

This act nearly caused the worthy sheriff to lose his equilibrium, and it forced him to beat the air on all sides with his long arms to keep from falling amid the crowd, many of whom held up their hands to catch him, while the building rung with peals of laughter. Instinctively Abe clutched at his belt and jerked it upward, tightening it a hole; but this was a dangerous move, although the Texan did not realize it until too late; for, upon pulling the belt again, he came near falling, being forced to stumble sideways along the bar for some distance.

These totally unexpected public displays of his inability to maintain a dignified position were very humiliating to Alamo Abe, for he seemed to have a better command of his mental than of his physical powers, as was evident by the glance of his eye.

Abe became really angry with himself, and so comical was the expression of his countenance, which underwent an almost continuous change, that the room rung with almost endless roars of laughter, so intensely amused were the crowd, in fact, that they were actually partially sobered through their uncontrollable mirth.

It was a regular "circus" to all, and the promise of fun without stint and without bloodshed or bitterness, was favorable in Benzine Bazaar. The landlord began to realize that he had better have remained behind his bar and deferred his speech to some more favorable occasion. He regretted not having addressed the assemblage previous to whisky's having settled in his pedal extremities.

But, as it was, there was no show for him to back out, jump out, or crawl out.

He had made himself ludicrous, had made an exhibition of himself in a manner far from dignified, and he was cunning enough to see that the only way out of his dilemma was to feign to be burlesquing a drunken manner, and thus amuse his audience still further. Under the circumstances, this was not a hard matter to accomplish; indeed, it would come as natural as life.

Full of his own merchandise as he was, Abe was confident that he could regain and hold the esteem and respect of his constituents, by catering to their "hankering" after fun.

He, therefore, resolved to carry out his intention, and the wishes of the denizens of the burg, by giving them a real old Texas speech.

Bracing himself in the position of a cavalryman when at saber-exercise on foot—that is, with limbs extended on either side, yet at the same time being on the alert to bring a foot quickly forward or backward, should he lunge either way—thus postured, Abe raised his right hand, as if to command silence. The laughter ceased on the instant, some being forced to cram their sombrero-brims into their mouths, while out shot from the huge mouth of the sheriff, the ejaculation:

"Ker-whoop!"

This was followed by a snort, resembling that of a frightened mustang.

The expression upon Abe's face, backed by these sounds, enforced attention. All became silent, all confident that, although the night thus far had been somewhat dull, they had at last "struck it rich," in the way of fun and entertainment.

"Feller-citz!"

Thus far Abe got, and then rubbed his sleeve across his brow.

"Glide on, Abe!"

"Don't be bashful!"

"Take a fresh start, Texas, and don't git bogged down at ther fu'st jump on ther trail!"

These, and other such encouraging words, came from all sides.

"Reckon yer'll 'low me ter hev a riffle o' time, boyees, ter sorter round up my ideas."

"Take another dose o' bug-juice, brace up, an' glide ahead, Abe!"

"Feller-citz!" again yelled the sheriff, flourishing his arms, "I doesn't need no coachin', nor no more p'ison. I'm all O. K., an' I don't 'low ter take a back seat on 'count o' a leetle bug-juice. That's me, boyees! (Cheers.)"

"Feller-citz, hyer I air, ormighty proud ter hev ther good opine o' sich a slam-up crowd, ter ther extent o' bein' 'lected sheriff o' ther bestest locate atween Raton Pass an' ther Grande. (Cheers.)"

"Gaze et me, you-uns what doesn't know me clean through, an' I reckon yer'll conclude I'm 'bout es much meat an' muscle es air giner'ly slapped inter one human. Down Texas-way, I war giner'ly sot up es a rip-snorter; an' in Las' Lay-out, I 'tends ter sot myself up es ther ontamed, full-sized panther-cat o' ther Rockies. Wa-hoop! (Cheers and laughter.)"

"When I gits a call ter stir up ther anermiles, in ther shape o' bag-slashers an' hoss-thieves, I 'tends ter gi'n 'em a idee thet I'm a ginerwine, ondivided, new-borned 'arthquake; an' that my breathe, when I'm hyderphobic mad, air wuss nor a tornado in ther alkali perrarers. (Cheers.)"

"I hain't never afore speechified, but I'm b'il-in' over wi' lingo ter-night; an', seein' hit's 'greeable, I 'tends ter spit her out. Ef I hits anybuddy harder'n I does myself, an' he hankers

fer satisfac', thar's a heft o' moonlight in ther street, an' my shooters air chuck-full o' cold death. But I'd a heap rather fight painter-style, by clawin', tooth and nail, ter work off ther extry whisk' what keeps my cabase on ther whirl. (Frantic whoops, and yells of encouragement.)

"Howsomever, I doesn't 'low thar's a pilgrim in this hyer crowd what air inclined ter tromp on my tail-feathers. Ef thar bees, he must be keeful, fer I'm a notcher from Notcherville. When I peeps cross sights, somethin' draps ter stay, every time; an' hit'll be ormighly bad ter go gunnin' arter Alermo Abe. When a pilgrim bucks ag'in' me, he hes ter lay four ton ter a ounce, fer I pan out billious es Tophet. Reckon that'll do ter record, boyees, es 'bout what a sheriff orter be; though I doesn't pretend ter be posted. You hear me twitter!

"I never war knowed ter scratch gravel, when bloody biz war spread es a lay-out; but allers play my keerds clean through ther game. Bein' thet's the case, I reckon I kin do my part es sheriff o' this hyer burg, takin' chances ter be laid out myself. (Cheers.)

"Anybody what hunts me fer a 'possum 'll find he's buckin' ag'in' a painter; an' he'd better git up an' git, quick es lightnin', er I'll hash him inter catfish bait, an' scatter him 'bout per-misc-us-like fer half a shoot.

"But, es I spit out afore, I ain't giner'ly b'ligerunt, an' doesn't often flare up. Fac' air, I'm gentle an' innocent es a suckin' pappoose until I'm riled; then I goes in full chisel, an' never war knowed ter fizzle. (Cheers.)

"I allers hed a spite ag'in' water es a bev'-ridge, 'count o' bein' borned in ther chap'roll, on ther trail, when my marm war meanderin' ter a fresh locate. Hit rained big guus thet time, an' I gut 'nough water ter last me clean through. Thet's why I slapped up Benzine Bazaar, ter 'commerdate sufferin' humans. (Terrific cheers.)

"I'm Alermo Abe, an' I hates Greasers wuss nor snakes. I sh'ud cackle ef I didn't, fer I'm sorter bleed relation o' Davy Crockett. Didn't he often assawat he war 'half-hoss, half-alligator?' Wal, I'm a leetle more'n half-alligator, an' ther rest air mule. Ef yer doesn't b'lieve hit, somebuddy git nigh my huffs!

"Mebbe so yer opinos I 'pears too gentle, too vealy an' saint-like, fer sheriff; but take a squar' gaze et me. I'm solid, plum up an' down—when I ain't chuck-full o' bug-juice—an', I means biz. Thunder an' blazes. I kin hustle 'roun' in my gentle, onobtrusive style, an' hang, shoot, er cut a batch o' crooked humans, without 'spilin' ther 'pearance o' ther stiff, ef he doesn't kick too much. Thet's ther kind of a Texan relict I am. Wa-hoop!"

Benzine Bazaar war now a perfect pandemonium of yells and laughter. Abe continued:

"My heart air es hard es a big-horn's head, where crooked humans air consarned; but es soft es a post-oak bog, when I'm mixed wi' squar' pilgrims. Gaze et me, pards! I'm all bone, meat, muscle, an' bleed, mixed in with sand 'nough ter make me es stiff es a wagon-tongue. This air a fac', an' I'm ready ter back my lingo wi' sticker er shooter, ef any galoot snears my fambly 'scutchon by sayin' I'm a pervaricator.

"Jist 'low me ter gaze on ther long-legged, knock-kneed chap'rell coyote, er swamp-owl, what dar's ter whisper my tongue's crooked, an' I'll send him on ther whiz, et telegraph stompede, towards dangnation!

"Ef thar's any one hyer what's gut bilious feelin's to'ards Alermo Abe, let him dust out, er else stan' up squar' an' toe ther trail in ther dissectin' biz. I gut all broke up in biz onc't, furnishin' boxes ter plant ther stiffs what I laid out cold, down-range; an' now thet I hes a fresh start, I doesn't want ter be bu'sted ag'in. When I furnishes game fer a funeral, thet's enough; don't be comin' ter me fer dressin', er thar'll be gravy spilled, an' no grub in camp!

"Yer hes 'lected me Sheriff o' Las' Lay-out, an' I'll spill ther bestest bleed in my systematics fer ther burg an' hits citz! (Loud cheers.)

"I'm no gold-edged galoot, an' I doesn't pretend ter sling highfalutin' Nited States lingo; but I kin pour down benzine es long es ther bestest copper-lined pilgrim 'mong yer, an' not wobble in my cowhides. I'm a ha'r-hunter from Hyena-town, ther ring-tailed Roarer o' the Rockies—ef I ain't, perforate my pericardium wi' lead pellets, an' then chaw me up an' spit me out!

"Yer mought es well scout 'roun' 'mong ther stars in a bob-tailed balloon arter white buzzards es ter "hold up" pilgrims fer "dust" 'roun' this hyer locate while I'm Sheriff o' Las' Lay-out. Thet's me, every day o' ther year, Fourth o' July an' preachin' days counted in!

"Thet's me, Alermo Abe, ther mountain screamer. Ker-whoop!"

CHAPTER XIV.

VIEWED WITH SUSPICION.

"Thet's me, Alermo Abe, ther mountain screamer. Ker-whoop!"

These words were the grand finale of the worthy sheriff's speech, and were fairly yelled; the last "ker-whoop" being strongly emphasized by a bound upward, with the evident in-

tention of bringing his heavy boots down upon the bar slab with the full force of his enormous weight. This, Abe doubtless considered, would be an appropriate winding up of his address, and cause a great impression.

But the unfortunate landlord was destined to create an impression of greater depth than he believed possible, not only upon his audience but upon his own head; for, totally unmindful of the fact that his cranium already nearly touched the flooring above, he had stooped to give force to his jump. The consequence was that he struck his head hard against the planks, and the burly form of Alamo Abe fell limp upon the bar and there remained.

The close of his speech had been received with shouts and laughter, and the sudden change in his attitude was so comical that this was kept up.

The men behind the bar, however, began presently to use their best endeavors in recovering their employer; but, notwithstanding their attention, poor Abe was destined to lie unnoticed and insensible, and the crowded room to become vacant. In fact, the still form of the Texan was fated to be the only human one remaining within the precincts of Benzine Bazaar.

A moment after the heavy fall of the sheriff, and before the assemblage had recovered from their uncontrollable laughter, all became instantly hushed by a piercing yell from the front door, which shot through the long room with wild and strange intonation.

At once an impressive silence fell upon all within the Bazaar, the denizens of the burg gazing into each other's eyes in the utmost amazement; for all were conscious of a sound like the continuous roll of distant thunder. For a moment or two, the vast jam of men were frozen in their tracks; the spell, which the unaccountable sound and tremulous motion had cast upon them, being broken by another prolonged yell.

Then followed a mad rush for the door, which was simply terrific; for the crowd became panic-stricken, by reason of the incomprehensible disturbance that had so unexpectedly occurred.

Something of superstitious dread seemed to be manifested by this mad rush, in the faces of the mob of men, some of whom fell, and were trampled upon remorselessly by their comrades.

The sound of fierce oaths, yells of pain, and of blows hard struck, filled the room; while the noise outside increased to a most thunderous tumult, the building trembling greatly.

Out from Benzine Bazaar poured the human stream, the gaze of all being guided down the street to the south; where a strange sight, indeed, met their view. It was one, however, which banished all apprehension from the minds of the beholders.

It was the thunderous and terrifically stampeding herd of half-wild horses, with the Mustang Monarch, upon Black Hawk, dashing on in their midst, in the same manner as described in a previous chapter; the young Texan having maintained his position, and kept the affrighted herd in headlong flight up the range, closely followed by the outlaw band. This, although urged on by Capitan Christobal, who offered large rewards for the capture of Blanco Bill, had failed to overtake the stampede; but had kept up the rapid race, even to the lowermost cabins of the town, so eager were they all to win the doubloons of their leader.

Not only this, but every member of the band, white or yellow, entertained a most deadly hatred toward the pursued, on account of the long trail they had been forced to follow, into a dangerous country, the headlong chase after him up the range, and last, but not least, for the slaying of their comrades at the big gorge.

Last Lay-out was destined to be shaken up, to be the theater of strange scenes, upon this, the night of their celebration, and the election of their sheriff.

Already the wrangling and carousing had been broken in upon, by the remarkable oration of Alamo Abe, followed by that official's instantaneous and unexpected retirement from active service, upon the very evening of his election. Close after came the strange and ominous sound, that had, upon investigation, proved but a stampede of mustangs. This stampede, however, was somewhat startling; from the fact that but a very few animals were within the limits of the burg—in fact, not within a day's journey in any direction—and those few were staked securely at different points. They were not a score in all, unless the oxen of the recently arrived train were taken into consideration; and for this there was no occasion, as the stampede was of horses.

This had been determined at a glance.

But the most singular and unaccountable feature of the view, that caught the eager eyes of the citizens of Last Lay-out, was, that a single horseman was in the very middle of the herd of frantic, foam-covered animals.

Had the "citz" been able to pierce the pines at the lower end of the street, and thus discovered the bandit band, they would not have been so much amazed at the situation of affairs; but this was, of course, impossible. Consequently they were at a loss to understand what had caused the stampede, where the herd could have

come from, and why the lone rider was in the midst of it.

Capitan Christobal had been furious, indeed almost insane with baffled rage, upon discovering the shanties, and thus realizing that his intended victim had undoubtedly escaped him. He ground his teeth, in his rage, and his black eyes shot murderous and vengeful glances at Blanco Bill, when the latter, amid the terrified animals, dashed into the street of the town.

But not, even then, did the South American give up all hope.

He turned his horse to the left, toward the gorge, and by a wave of his hand, bade his band follow; all dashing amid the bowlders and pines, within the screen of which the outlaws made their way, parallel with the western line of cabins in the rear of the same, and next to the range. Then they halted, thus sheltered from view, directly back of the rear entrance to Benzine Bazaar.

Here, every second man dismounted at the order of their chief; half their number remaining upon their horses, and keeping hold of the bridle-reins of their dismounted comrades.

The latter, with Capitan Christobal, at once stole cautiously, as near as the cover would permit, to the cabins, and there awaited developments. Christobal, although he realized the great danger of his position, and the foolishness of remaining near the town, resolved, in his mad fury, that he would risk his own life, and the lives of his men, rather than give up all hope of capturing the man who, he had sworn, should die.

Possibly there might yet be an opportunity of capturing the American, who would deem himself safe, after thus reaching a town, and consequently would take no steps to guard against being taken.

Thus were matters tending toward strange occurrences, which none of the actors therein could possibly have dreamed of; the Fates seeming to influence those of whom we write, to take the parts and position which they did.

But, to return to the Mustang Monarch.

He had been, indeed, greatly relieved upon discovering Last Lay-out; for the race had seemed very long to him, and he had begun to fear that he must have passed the town, and must eventually be taken by his pursuers.

Upon dashing up the street into the town, Blanco Bill had ceased his efforts to keep the stampede going by his yells, and felt great relief that he should soon end the race, and be able to rest and recover from the excitement and exertion he had undergone during the time when he should have been asleep, after his long ride of the previous day.

He was to learn but too soon, however, that there was not only no rest for him; but, that the dangers and excitement through which he had safely passed thus far, were as nothing to those which were to come. This night was to be the night of all nights to him.

The scene that met the wondering eyes of the crowd, who streamed pell-mell out from Benzine Bazaar, was most impressive and puzzling; more so from the fact, that not a man in Last Lay-out was in anything near a state of sobriety. Just the opposite, indeed; for their brains were inflamed by the vile poison, which they had freely swallowed.

They saw the Mustang Monarch, on his superb black steed, in the midst of the stampede, and they detected the fact, that the herd was made up of animals of many different marks and brands. This was indisputable proof that the horses had been stolen.

Further evidence was it, that such a number of animals were at that particular point on a stampede, evidently having been driven at great speed a long distance.

This left no doubt in the minds of many, that the man who rode in the midst of the herd was a horse-thief; that he had been pursued, had purposely frightened the animals into a frenzied state, with a view of escape, and, upon discovering that he had driven the herd into a town—of the existence of which he had been ignorant—he had endeavored to dash ahead, and turn the stampede; thus becoming inextricably surrounded by the maddened horses, a fact which rendered his capture easy.

It needed but a moment's reflection, for a few of the less intoxicated miners to arrive at these very natural conclusions; and these immediately yelled, as they jerked their revolvers.

"Corral ther cuss, boyees! He's a boss hoss-snatcher! Shoot him off his nag, ef he doesn't jerk up! Let ther anermiles whiz, but snake in ther nag-stealer!"

Such cries rung out from different threats, and served to arouse and enlighten the whole assemblage.

In consequence of this, Blanco Bill, in place of seeing a friendly spirit manifested by the citizens of the town, into which he had made his strange advent, beheld fierce looks and leveled weapons; while, from many a throat, rung the words, in merciless intonation.

"Skute outen ther critters, with han's up, er we'll shoot yer from yer hoss!"

So great was the din of clattering hoofs, however, that the young Texan heard not this command; but the manner and actions of the mob

were most certainly sufficiently ominous of death to decide him that, if he had reached a town of his own countrymen, he was far from being as safe as he had been when in danger of assassination, of being trampled to death in the mountain gorge, or of being shot by his merciless pursuers!

CHAPTER XV.

THEY MET BY CHANCE.

ALTHOUGH the liquor-infuriated denizens of Last Lay-out had the game in their own hands—holding the life of Blanco Bill in their power—yet they did not pull triggers; perhaps, for the reason that they considered a "lynch picnic" would come in nicely on that particular occasion.

The capture of the man, however, seemed no easy matter to accomplish, as not one of the miners had a horse near at hand.

Meantime, the Mustang Monarch strove, in a very skillful manner, to free himself from the herd. As the only seeming place of safety was within it, this movement on his part surprised the observers.

Full half the length of the street had been passed by the young Texan, when new actors appeared upon the scene. These were none others than Katie Jordan and her attendant, McCarthy; the burro following at a full gallop.

It so happened that Katie and Teddy, being fearful of encountering other Indians, had made good speed down the range, and were searching for Last Lay-out, when they heard the yells of the miners, which indicated the location of the burg. It was a wild sight that greeted them, yet they entertained no apprehension of danger; indeed, they were less frightened than surprised and puzzled.

But the amazement of the "citz" upon the sudden and unexpected appearance of the beautiful young girl and her escort, and the danger they were in of being caught in the stampede, was dumfounding. It caused them all, for the moment, to lose sight of Blanco Bill, whose efforts to guide Black Hawk out from the wild herd had ceased immediately upon the appearance of the maiden.

The young man realized that he was in a position of great peril from the manner and actions of the people of the town into which he had dashed in so peculiar a way; although, for the life of him, he could not decide or account for, the plainly expressed enmity—and that for the reason that he had not understood the import of the words that had been yelled at him.

It appeared to our friend that he had arrived in a town made up wholly of desperadoes and outlaws.

The Mustang Monarch was thoroughly amazed. But his astonishment was unbounded, at the sudden appearance of the beautiful girl in that wild spot; especially at that late hour, and attended by but one man—he being, besides, not only aged, but apparently wounded; for poor Teddy's bruised and swollen head was plainly to be seen.

Only a flitting glance, however, was given by the young Texan to Teddy McCarthy; for Katie claimed and chained his whole attention and admiration. Indeed, at first sight of the lovely maiden, who sat so gracefully poised in her saddle, upon the superb "pinto" horse, Blanco Bill forgot, for the moment, everything else.

From the very instant that Katie had broken clear from the pines her eyes had been fixed in a gaze of admiration which she thought not of concealing, upon the handsome form and face of the stranger, thus strangely situated in the midst of that wild stampede. It was a picture which she felt sure would never be banished from her mind.

Even the danger of her own position was lost sight of, in her admiration of the young horseman, seated on a sable steed that seemed to have been created especially for him, and speeding on amid that mass of terrified brutes, by which she soon found herself surrounded.

As for the Mustang Monarch, he felt that he had met his fate; that this maiden, who thus appeared so strangely before him, and who was in danger of death, could wield an influence over him such as none ever had before. His whole being seemed to have been electrified by a single glance of her eye.

He determined, at once, to gain the side of the angelic girl, and extricate her from the frantic herd which threatened her.

The last dwelling of Last Lay-out was passed, yet on plunged the mad stampede, the young Texan hurrying toward the fast galloping Calico and its lovely burden.

Regardless of danger, Katie Jordan gazed behind her; the eyes of the maiden meeting those of the young man, in a look that spoke of the deep interest she could not but feel in him, though a stranger. Rarely, it is presumed, had man and maid met under stranger and more startling circumstances.

As for Teddy McCarthy, the old man was dreadfully concerned for the safety of his lovely charge; yet he was powerless to do anything to-

ward extricating either her or himself from their peculiar and perilous predicament.

Texas, the burro, having made sure of his own comfort and safety, had begun to graze with comical composure, satisfied that he had avoided being swallowed up in the stampede, and evidently disposed to take no further part in the excitement of the evening.

"May the saints preserve us!" had been the wild cry of Teddy. "Sure this is the devil's own night intoirely, an' I'm thinkin' it's oursilves that'll never be afther seein' the sun again!"

Katie was too much occupied to make any response.

The herd, when it had been under the control of Christobal and his men, had been kept at a gallop, and had therefore been in an uncontrollable stampede for some twelve miles; consequently the animals were in a most desperate and frenzied condition, many of them, at times, stumbling from fatigue, and plunging, with wild snorts, to retain their footing.

This caused our three friends to be in a very dangerous position; but Blanco Bill felt that his own life was as nothing, in comparison with that of the fair being in his front—felt that he would gladly risk his life in an attempt to save her, and this he resolved to make.

If one of the frantic horses in front of him should fall, and Black Hawk were to stumble over the animal, the young man knew that he would inevitably be trampled to death; hence the greatest skill and care must be practiced in gaining the side of the maiden.

The same sad fate might be hers at any moment, and this thought caused the Mustang Monarch to dash forward at once; Black Hawk wedging himself with such force between two of the horses in front, that the animals were not only forced away on each side, but so suddenly, that they both sunk to the earth, and were trampled by those in the rear. This gave our young friend more hope, and the plan he had conceived was immediately carried out.

He was greatly averse to slaying the half-wild horses, but the life of this fair girl was to be considered, more than all the horses in the universe.

Strange, but nevertheless true it was, that a great, and to him astounding, change had come over Blanco Bill, in a few moments' time.

He felt, although he could not account for the feeling that this stranger maiden was more to him than all the world—more than life! He was ready to risk his life, for one smile of thanks from the ruby lips and bright eyes of the angelic being, to whom he had never spoken a word, and whom, until a few brief moments previous, he had never so much as beheld.

But he stopped not to analyze the most pleasing emotions that now controlled him.

Instantly upon forming his plan of operations he jerked one of his revolvers, and at once began to blaze away; shooting down the animals to the right and left, and in front of Black Hawk, at the same time driving spurs, and keeping a stiff rein, to prevent if possible his steed from falling to the earth. Soon, six horses had fallen; Black Hawk bounding afar, over or between the carcasses, toward Katie Jordan.

No sooner had he emptied his revolver, than he drew its mate, and again the sharp crack of the weapon rung out: horses falling at each report—the last one directly behind the affrighted girl, who turned pale, at the sight that met her view as she glanced over her shoulder.

The shooting of such a number of animals in a direct line caused, as Blanco Bill had anticipated, a break or parting of the herd. The next instant, his horse bounded up beside Calico, and he thrust out his hand to clutch the bridle-rein; but it was grasped, at once, by the fair equestrian herself.

One moment, while madly galloping side by side, and hand in hand, the eyes of man and maid, so strangely met, became fixed upon each other; and, in that moment, each realized that they had met their fate—that, henceforth, as long as life lasted, would endure the love, born amid the dangers of that night.

Katie Jordan never knew just how it occurred; but, as it seemed to her, in a single instant of time, she sat Calico in the rear of that fearful stampede in safety: her panting and foam bespattered favorite standing still, with ears pricked forward, and eyes starting, staring toward the on-galloping herd, within which poor Teddy McCarthy was to be seen; the luckless old man gazing in his rear, and gesticulating wildly.

Then, for the first time, the voice of the Mustang Monarch broke upon the ear of Kathleen Jordan; as he lifted his sombrero, in polite, indeed reverential salutation.

"I must beg of you to remain here, miss, if you please, for the present. You are now in perfect safety—thank God! I go to rescue your old friend yonder."

Katie was speechless. Not a word left her lips, as Blanco Bill, upon Black Hawk, sped onward to the rescue of Teddy McCarthy.

But though the young girl spoke not, her eyes were fixed, in almost worshipful adoration, upon the proud form and noble bearing of her handsome preserver, who, from that moment, she felt assured, would rule her love and life.

CHAPTER XVI.

LOVE WAS LORD OF ALL.

THE Mustang Monarch urged his horse quickly to the rescue of Teddy McCarthy; but, before he reached the herd, they became so scattered that the old Irishman easily freed himself from their midst. He immediately whirled about, and soon meeting the young Texan, called out impulsively:

"God be wid yees, thin, whoever ye are! But this has been the devil's own night intoirely. Indade, but for mesilf, a painted haythen w'u'd been afther takin' Miss Kathleen the Lord knows where, back beyant there. Sure, it was a big dose o' lead I give him."

"I'm hopin' there's rist an' p'ace in the shanty town forninst us, thin. But, be the piper that played before Moses, it's the fine huckin' man ye are yersilf, begorra!"

Although Blanco Bill could not help smiling, it would have seemed sacrilege to him, to have laughed at this quaint old man, who, it seemed, had recently saved the life of that fair young girl. This aged Irishman, it appeared, was so honored as to be the trusted friend and companion of one, who, in so short a time, had banished all else from his own mind, except thoughts of herself; more than that, who had filled his heart with a love that astounded him by its strength and depth, and the heavenly happiness that it occasioned.

Had he not detected, in the free and open gaze of Katie Jordan, that she was most favorably impressed by him; that gratitude, if no stronger feeling, was mirrored in her bright black eyes—had not all this been plainly shown, without attempt at reserve, he would not have been buoyed up by the exquisite happiness and hope, that were betrayed in his every look and act.

As Teddy ceased speaking, Blanco Bill turned Black Hawk on the lark track, and gazed anxiously toward the point at which he had parted with the bright angel of his thoughts. A close observer would have detected that the young man could hardly believe his senses; that the strange occurrences of the night seemed too startling and unreasonable to be true, that all appeared like a dream, and he half suspected that the view toward Last Lay-out would not contain the central figure for which he looked.

At length he spoke, for the first time, to Teddy:

"You astonish me," he said, "by what you tell me! Do you mean to assert that there are Indians in the vicinity, and that this young lady came near being captured by one of them?"

"Troth an' I do, sir! An' if ye'll be afther luckin', ye'll see the haythen craythur's fixin's, that I tuck from him, afther blowin' a hole in his back that a wolf c'u'd crawl into, be gobs!"

The young Texan examined McCarthy's saddle.

Proofs were there, plain proofs, to back the old man's word.

"I am, indeed, astonished," said Blanco Bill. "But, in the name of wonder, why has your young mistress periled her life, in thus coming to such a wild and savage region?"

"Surely she must have some strong motive."

"Sure, sor, Miss Kate's brother, Patsey Jordan be name—an' a wild gossoon be nature—struck out for the wild West some years ago, an' the devil a back did he iver come till Scranton. Thin Miss Katie tuck the notion she'd hunt for him. An' she left her mother, her father bein' dead intoirely—rest his soul!—an' a sister an' a brother, sayin' she'd be afther findin' Patsey."

"Thin Teddy McCarthy—that's mesilf, be gobs!—couldn't l'ave Katie till he lost intoirely; an' here yer honor sees us, on our way till Last Lay-out, as they call the shanties beyant. But devil a bit does culd Teddy think Miss Katie'll ever see Patsey again."

"Doesn't Miss Jordan know in what part of the country her brother is located?"

"Divil a word, be cripes! Sure Patsey's been here an' there, like a jack-a-lantern over a bog. But, sor, how come you till be mixed up wid thin crazy bastes?"

"It is too long a story for the present. But I must tell you, McCarthy, I don't much like the looks of things here. Every man in the place seems to be intoxicated, and I hesitate about advising Miss Jordan to enter the town. Perhaps it would be safer to encamp in the pines."

"Bad 'cess till the loikes o' the crazy divils in this curse of a country, anyway! Sure it's Teddy that'll go an' see for himself what sort of a place Last Lay-out is. Ah, thin! Miss Kathleen, it's safe ye are—thanks till this gentleman an' the saints! It's mesilf c'u'd dance a horrun-pipe wid pure joy, this blissid minit!"

The Mustang Monarch raised his sombrero, with a joyous smile upon his handsome face, as his eyes now met those of Katie Jordan.

Naturally self-possessed, and not easily excited or alarmed, her emotions being readily under her control, she now, in the presence of this handsome stranger, felt a reserve and diffidence that were new to her, and to a certain extent unaccountable.

"Miss Jordan," said the young man, "your friend here has escaped the stampede, without my assistance; and I am indebted to him for some little knowledge concerning yourself, including your name."

"Allow me to introduce myself as William Williamson, at your service, now and at all times.

"I have been greatly astonished to learn that your life and liberty have but recently been endangered by the attack upon you of an Indian. Permit me to say that this is a most dangerous section of the country for a young lady like yourself to pass through."

"Mr. Williamson," returned the maiden, "I will not waste words in expressing my thanks to you, and the pleasure that I feel on account of your timely aid, for words are too meaningless. It is true that I came near falling a victim to savage cruelty; indeed, but for Teddy I should undoubtedly be now far away, a captive to a hideous Indian. My old and devoted friend here, however, shot the savage; and came very near killing himself at the same time, as you may perceive.

"This has, indeed, been an eventful night. I shall never forget it, and the services of you both. My deepest gratitude is yours.

"But, had we not better proceed to Last Lay-out? I presume Teddy has explained my presence in these wilds, Mr. Williamson?"

"He has; and I must say that, although your object is commendable, you are taking fearful risks, and with but little chance of success. Your sisterly devotion is very strong, and speaks well for you as a young lady of great resolution, daring, and devotion.

"But, as this night has also been somewhat exciting to me, even previous to my having had the pleasure of doing you a service—for which I have been already more than a thousand times repaid—I must say, that I am still somewhat suspicious and apprehensive on your account.

"From that which I detected, in my dash through the town below, I doubt the honesty of the people there; indeed, they appeared to be either insane from drink, or else desperate characters, with whom you would be in the greatest danger. They were about to shoot me from my horse, when the sudden and unexpected appearance of yourself and Mr. McCarthy drew off their attention from me.

"They seemed astonished at beholding you, as indeed so was I. You will now understand, Miss Jordan, that I am deeply indebted to you; in fact, without doubt I owe you my life, which is, as I have said, at your service. But I do not think it prudent for you to enter Last Lay-out, until I go there, and ascertain if it is safe for you to do so."

"That must not be," returned Katie, quickly. "You have admitted that they were about to shoot you, and consequently your life would be in danger should you return. Some of the men of the town must hold enmity toward you; but, as this cannot be the case as regards Teddy, he can go on ahead, if you really think it necessary."

"Miss Jordan, I know nothing of any man in the place. This is my first appearance here. But I must explain how I came to be in the midst of the stampede."

Blanco Bill then related his adventures.

"It seems," said Katie, "that although you have given no one cause to bear enmity toward you, those outlaws wished to capture you."

"They certainly did," was the reply, "but it is all a mystery to me, and the actions of these men of Last Lay-out are just as unaccountable. It is bewilderingly strange, but I will fathom the mystery before I leave this locality.

"But you are tired and sleepy, having already been through dangers sufficient to unbalance the minds of many of your sex. You and Teddy had better enter one of the adjacent pine *motte*s, dismount, and rest; while I ride into the town and investigate affairs. Should I not return, remain secreted; for there will be danger for you if I am overcome."

"Be the powers o' mud, thin, but ye'll not shtir a step intil the curse o' a town, if the murderin' blaggards were goin' till shoot ye when ye were ridin' through afore! It's meself that'll go, for divil a wan o' them'll hurt ould Teddy."

"Both o' yees stap beyant in the pines, an' I'll be wid yees soon, plase God! Take care o' yerselves, an' the blussid saints take care of us all!"

Before either Bill or Katie could utter a word in remonstrance the old man was galloping toward Last Lay-out.

And there, sitting their horses side by side, the youthful pair remained; the hearts of each filled with emotions that were expressed most plainly by glance and manner, but not by word.

It was to both a most happy experience; the whole world and all the past experience of each being as naught—both living in the present, and praying from their inmost souls that nothing might ever come to mar the happiness, so recently born, and never before dreamed of.

Without a word, Blanco Bill took the bridle-rein of Calico in his hand, and gazed into Katie's eyes—unmistakable love-light flashing from each. Then he urged his noble steed toward the pine *motte*, Calico and Black Hawk walking neck and neck; the happy young lovers and their horses soon passing from view into the dark and silent shades, amid the sweetly-scented balsamic air, over the thick carpet of needle-like leaves.

CHAPTER XVII.

CLAMORING FOR BLOOD.

AFTER passing the border of the pine *motte*, the youthful pair found themselves beneath trees of a larger growth; free from branches for full ten feet, and also from undergrowth.

Blanco Bill sprang lightly to the ground, allowing Black Hawk to go free, and stepped to the side of Calico. A bar of moonlight shone full upon the head of Katie Jordan, crowning her form with silvery radiance; as if even the majestic Luna felt called upon to favor the lovers, by revealing the striking beauty of the maiden to her ardent admirer.

Neither of them spoke a word.

There stood the Mustang Monarch, his handsome face bent upward, his arms held out to Katie Jordan, offering her the assistance which he wished her to accept. For a moment, the young girl sat her horse, still as a statue; but, drawn by an irresistible influence, she sunk slowly into the open arms, that wished so much to inclose her fairy form.

These lovers, who had never told their love, neither of whom had, an hour previous, dreamed of the existence of the other, trembled with the intensity of their emotions; their astonished bewilderment at the change in their whole beings, being almost as deep as their intense, though new-born affection.

The queenly head of Kathleen Jordan sunk upon the shoulder of Will Williamson; and thus, for some time, the pair remained. Both wished, in their hearts, that the happy spell would last forever. Both banished all else from their minds, but the blissful thoughts that were, in each, wholly and entirely of the other.

Then the young man spoke, his voice so soft and tender that the sound surprised himself; spoke, with an intonation so expressive of his admiration, that volumes of words could not have told as much.

Yet, it was but a single word, that left his lips:

"Katie!"

Slowly the maiden raised her head, until her lovely face was directly in front of that of her lover. Then, from her lips came, like the whisper of a gentle zephyr, the words that his eager ears drank in:

"Will!"

"Thank God! Yes, and thank you, Katie Jordan! Henceforth and forever I am yours—yours until death, and after death, if that is possible. Bless the bandits for seeking my life! Bless the kind Fates for leading me to you!"

They were, indeed, a handsome pair, seemingly created for each other, and seemingly having been destined to meet, and to love—to have been by some strange and subtle influence drawn together, there by the base of that adamantine range.

"This is all so sudden, so strange," said the young girl; "I can hardly believe my senses. It cannot, I think, be more than an hour since we first met; but from the moment I saw you, in the midst of that dreadful mass of maddened horses, I seemed fascinated. And, when I first gazed into your eyes, my whole heart was yours. It seems unmaidenly for me thus to express myself—thus to allow you to clasp me in your arms—yet I cannot resist the impulses that control me."

"He who has brought us together, Katie darling, alone shall part us. Ten thousand thanks for your precious words! Our destiny is united forever. I thank Heaven for the happiness I enjoy this precious moment—this moment of all moments in my life!"

There, among the whispering pines, were Will Williamson and Katie Jordan betrothed; with no witness except Calico and Black Hawk—fitting witnesses, however, for the Mustang Monarch and his prospective bride.

Suddenly while they stood silent, there came a crashing of branch and bush through the *motte*; proving the approach of human or brute, at rapid speed.

At once, Blanco Bill drew the maiden to his side, his left arm encircling her waist; and, at the same instant, faced the point of alarm, revolver in hand. He held the weapon cocked and leveled, his eyes blazing, his lips clinched, and his limbs braced for a conflict to the death—a struggle to protect the angelic girl, who was all the world to him.

Had not the experiences of the night been already so tragic and startling to both himself and Katie, the young Texan would not have been so apprehensive of danger; and, had he been alone, he would have been far less concerned, and not nearly so hasty in his movements. But the responsibility of his position, with the maiden he so adored depending upon him for protection, caused him to practice the utmost caution, and nerved him to combat.

It transformed him, giving him a herculean strength beyond anything he had ever before possessed; and woe be to those who sought to harm the fair girl his arm so tenderly clasped.

Had he not recalled the evident enmity of the men of Last Lay-out, Blanco Bill would not have entertained suspicion of coming danger.

And Katie, what of her on this occasion?

The little black-eyed, fairy-like beauty ban-

ished all her contempt for danger, all her strength of will and daring, and clung to her new-found protector, as the vine to a giant oak; for, sweet it was to her, to gaze into that handsome face, which was now stamped with the extreme of fury and determination, born of his love for herself, and an almost insane hatred for any who might seek to harm her.

Like some vengeful god, did the young Mustang Monarch appear: his proud form poised for fight, while arrows of moonlight shot down upon man and maid, revealing a picture that would have driven an artist into an ecstasy of delight.

But the young man had not been thus startled, alarmed, and caused to prepare for desperate defense, by the sounds of crashing brush alone. His keen ears had detected the distant din of a mob of men, yelling and howling like demons.

Blanco Bill rightly interpreted these sounds.

He knew that a frenzied crowd were fast approaching from Last Lay-out, and that they were thirsting for blood—his blood—although, why they should seek his life was to him a mystery.

Even these sounds would not have been noticed, or at least would not have alarmed him, had not the thought of the whisky-inflamed faces, and leveled weapons of the "citz" of Last Lay-out flashed upon his mind, on the instant.

Thus, for a moment, stood our two young friends; Bill, with revolver leveled, and finger curved around trigger, ready to "blaze" into the breast of whoever should dash, with murderous intent, into the *motte*.

Katie Jordan trembled; for, although she was as free from fear as any of her sex could be under the circumstances, yet she felt great concern in regard to her protector.

Rapidly the tumult drew near, yet not a word passed between the pair.

The young girl looked up into her lover's face, with a gaze of adoration; seeming to have forgotten the cause of alarm, and to be heedless of all else except the one by her side.

Blanco Bill's eyes were fixed across the *motte*, glancing along the sights of his revolver.

The inner branches of pines were suddenly dashed aside, and into the clear space shot none other than Texas, the little burro, in a wild gallop; the pack still upon his back, and his long ears pointed forward.

Directly toward the lovers galloped Texas; Katie disengaging herself hastily from the arm of the young man, and, with a glad cry, springing to the side of her strange four-footed friend. The burro made instant halt, its huge ears dropping at once; while it gazed at Blanco Bill, and around the *motte*, as if it sought to discover proofs that would enable it to decide whether anything further, in the way of excitement, had occurred during its absence.

Only one glance, did the "Boss Buccaro" give at it; then he bent his ear, straining his senses, in endeavoring to decide more fully the character of the sounds he had detected in the distance. Then he rushed forward, thrusting his revolver into its scabbard, and crying out:

"Come, Katie! We must fly. For some unknown reason, the men of Last Lay-out seek my life. Teddy has been taken, or he would have joined us. Come, my darling; I will protect you while life lasts!"

"Here would I stand, and brave—ay, scorn the maddened mob, but for your presence; for I have done no wrong. It may be that the town is in league with the outlaws who chased me. But I'll mow my way through the drink-frenzied fools!"

Katie Jordan sprang erect, as her lover spoke, her black eyes filled with a furious light.

"Why, oh, why, do they seek your life, Will? But I forget—you yourself do not know. Yes, let us fly, and at once."

"Poor Teddy! Why did I allow him to leave me? He must not be deserted. Cannot we avoid the mob, and rescue him? Oh, hear those horrid yells!"

The sounds made by the on-coming citizens were now plainly to be heard, and Blanco Bill sprang forward, clasping Katie in his arms. He then ran toward the horses.

Placing his darling in her saddle, the young man sprang astride of Black Hawk, and jerking a revolver—his face pale, and teeth set—he shot a glance toward the maiden, who had drawn her pistol, and with flashing eyes and daring mien, had guided Calico up beside the black steed.

There was a moment's silence.

Then, from many throats close at hand, in coarse and mad intonation, shot frantic and vengeful yells.

"Down wi' ther stampeder!"

"Hang ther cuss up fer seed!"

"Jark up ther hoss-stealer!"

"Short rope with a greased loop fer him!"

"He's run ther purty gal off, an' we'll choke him off!"

These, and other cries of like character were plainly heard, with the tramping of many feet upon the hard-beaten trail beyond the *motte*.

It was plain that the "citz" of Last Lay-out, all intoxicated as they were, were after the Mustang Monarch.

The yells were those of frantic men, thrusting

for blood, with vengeful fury; their liquor-crazed brains being incapable of entertaining a thought of justice or mercy.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A RACE FOR LIFE.

"Come, Katie, my darling, we will balk that crazy mob," exclaimed Blanco Bill.

"I know now why they seek my life. They believe that I am a horse-thief; that I stole the herd of animals, in the midst of which I dashed into their town. Keep to my right, and maintain equal speed with me. If hard-pressed, you must dash on ahead, while I hold that crazy mob at bay."

Straight out from behind the *motte*, the handsome pair shot forth; the young man between Katie and the point of danger. No sooner had they cleared the *motte*, than a fierce yell burst from many throats; and the pair discovered, to the south, and not a pistol-shot from them, a score of the infuriated "citz," with weapons in hand.

"Halt, or we'll bore yer!"

"Death ter nag-stealers!"

"Thar's ther purty gal—go fer her, boyces!"

"Plug him, but don't hit ther leetle gal!"

"Don't nary one o' yer, pull trigger! Corral him fer a lynch picnic!"

Such were the cries, that came from the lips of the rough men, all more or less intoxicated.

Bloated faces, bloodshot eyes, clothing and hair in disarray, after the scrambling struggle out from the establishment of Alamo Abe—all madly rushing, in a scattered crowd, toward Blanco Bill and his fair companion. Thus were the citizens of Last Lay-out presented to them.

Well knew the young Texan that the mob would not hesitate to pour a volley at him, did he manifest the slightest disposition to shoot.

They might wound or kill Katie Jordan, now more than life to him; and the very thought of this was so terrible that it curbed his almost overpowering rage, and changed his determination to make a daring dash upon them.

This exciting scene had a strange effect upon the maiden. She could see that the "citz" had made up their minds to have a hanging, or else kill the young man at once, did he resist capture.

Their yells were the yells of men insane for blood, and no amount of reasoning would convince them that Blanco Bill was not a horse-thief.

Besides, in their present condition; they were incapable of reasoning; and, it was evident, that the escape of the Mustang Monarch, when dashing through the town, had doubled their fury and hatred.

All this, Katie saw, and it decided her to immediate action.

Jerking Calico to a halt, until Black Hawk passed on a length ahead, the young girl spurred her horse directly between the mob and her lover.

The latter was intent, at the moment, upon examining the ground ahead, and forming plans to gain Last Lay-out; thence dashing through the town, and rescuing Teddy if possible. For Katie had declared that she would not abandon her old friend and protector, who had so recently saved her from a fate worse than death.

Only a couple of moments had elapsed since leaving the *motte*. They had been riding at full speed toward the range; but, as the mob had been at some distance from the *motte*, they had not been able to get to the west of the crowd.

On the instant that Katie performed the maneuver, she cried out:

"Spur on, Will—spur on! They will not shoot me, and they cannot harm you now!"

"Never!" yelled Blanco Bill. "It shall never be said that I sheltered myself behind a woman. Do you spur on, Katie, or I'll halt here and fight them. Ride for Last Lay-out! We'll rescue Teddy. Spur on!"

So saying, he shot past Katie, the black horse rearing upon its hind legs at jerk of bit, and facing the mob, which was now quite near.

"They will kill you!" cried the young girl, in an agony of apprehension: "come! See, I will ride ahead, as you wish!"

In a loud voice, clear as a bell, the Mustang Monarch yelled:

"Back, you cowardly dogs, or I'll shoot some of you in your tracks! Back, I say, and I'll meet you all, if you don't come too many at once, in your town, after I've found a suitable place to leave this lady. You, man in front, with the red shirt, pick up your hat!"

The hat of the man designated was, at the time Bill spoke, upon his head; but as the last word left the young Texan's lips, his revolver was leveled between the ears of Black Hawk. Then followed a spurt of fire and a whip-like crack, and the sombrero of the red-shirted miner fell from his head, perforated by the bullet.

The Mustang Monarch then turned Black Hawk's head west, Katie comprehending his object, and away they both galloped headlong, a rattling fusillade of revolver-shots sounding in their ears from the rear.

Their speed was simply terrific, and in a minute's time, having passed beyond the range of revolvers, they dashed toward Last Lay-out.

Katie felt sure, by this time, that she had made a great mistake—that the mob would have shown no favor whatever—that they would have had no respect for her sex, in their demoralized condition.

She now regretted having insisted upon going to the town to investigate the cause of Teddy McCarthy's absence, for she felt that her rescuer would be slain. The poor girl was, indeed, in a tortured state of mind, and neither she nor her lover spoke a word as they galloped on. The latter, upon reasoning rapidly in regard to the condition of affairs, concluded that it would be tempting fate to ride boldly into Last Lay-out; for well he knew there must be a large number of the citizens who were in the same condition of drunken fury, and who entertained the same hostile feelings toward himself, still in the burg.

Besides this, those who had been outwitted were of course now on their return, and doubly infuriated at his having escaped them when they had believed him entirely in their power.

The outlook was far from promising, yet it would be more than cowardly to leave poor old Teddy to the mercy of such a mob.

Thus cogitating, Blanco Bill spurred up by the side of Calico, and catching the hand of Katie Jordan, exclaimed:

"It is very unfortunate, my darling, that we allowed your old friend to enter the town, for it has placed us in a most perilous predicament. We could have escaped up the range easily had Teddy been with us; and if we enter Last Lay-out openly, I fear that your liberty, and possibly your life, will be endangered. I cannot hope to defend you against a whole town, the people of which all seem to be drunk or crazy."

"It is better, I think, that we turn to the right, and pass through the pines, between the shanties and the mountains."

"I am perfectly willing," said the maiden; "indeed it relieves my mind greatly to have you propose it. I cannot believe, however, that the miners, intoxicated though they seem to be, will offer me violence. It was a great mistake, I now see, to permit poor Teddy to leave us, but I do not see how we can do him any good at present."

"He must be detained by force—indeed I am confident of it. But you must not think of entering that town to-night. Those men would take your life. Only think of my condition, should I be left alone, and unprotected by either Teddy or yourself. Do let us, at once, dash to the rear of the cabins, as you proposed, before it is too late!"

"Katie, I trust and believe that the Power, who has protected you thus far, will watch over us, and will not allow villainy and crime to triumph. Did your safety not depend, as I truly believe it does, upon myself, I would ride boldly into town, and confront my accusers."

"Had the strange events of this night occurred without your having become an actor in them, I should have been in Last Lay-out before this time; and blood would have been spilled, had they tried to lynch me. I have curbed my just anger, for your sake, darling."

"Turn to the right at once, while I ride behind, ready to defend you; for death may lurk in every *motte*, or amid the bowlders."

Instantly the young girl obeyed.

Blanco Bill had determined to rescue Teddy.

He would leave Katie, securely secreted, and enter the town on foot and alone, to seek and save the old man who had been so faithful to Katie Jordan.

But, surrounded as they were with peril, the pair were happy in their mutual trust, and through being permitted to enjoy each other's company. There was no need for them to utter words of devotion, for glances spoke more plainly.

Down in the rear of the west line of shanties they proceeded, little dreaming that they were nearing the coverts of Capitan Christobal and his band of outlaws; for the Mustang Monarch knew not of the presence of the South American in New Mexico, and his fair companion knew not that such a man existed.

To their left, in the street of the town, they heard a wild tumult, which proved that their suspicions, in regard to there being many of the "citz" still in Last Lay-out, were correct.

Riding slowly, and keeping pines and bowlders between them and the burg, the pair passed on, until they determined that they were in the rear of the central portion of the street.

Just as they halted, the commotion of the town seemed to increase; and Blanco Bill, thinking it possible that the drunken miners might lynch poor McCarthy, urged Black Hawk into the nearest *motte*, bidding Katie follow.

There dismounting, he said:

"Promise me, darling, you will remain here, regardless of any sounds you may hear. Teddy must not be left longer at the mercy of these men."

"Go, Will," she replied; "but, oh, do hasten your return! But do not ask me to promise anything. We, neither of us, know what may happen. Go at once, or I may not be willing to have you leave my side at all!"

"I wish, from my soul, I was not obliged to part with you thus. Go leave you here, in darkness, and alone, with probable danger near is agony itself. But bear up, and believe with me it will all come out right!"

Blanco Bill saw the tears on the maiden's cheeks, and heard her choking sobs; but, tearing himself from her clinging embrace, he stole away in the darkness.

Katie Jordan was alone! Alone, beneath the shades of the sighing pines, with the thick darkness around her, and the weird whisperings of the evening breeze amid the foliage, deepening the despairing gloom that had suddenly oppressed her.

The gloomy apprehensions of the poor girl were now doubled; for she now felt that not only would her poor old protector probably be hanged by the mob, but her lover's life would also most certainly be sacrificed, in the vain effort to save him.

For what chance, humanly speaking, could there be of rescue, or of safety, amid such surroundings?

CHAPTER XIX.

TEDDY ON HIS TRAVELS.

WHEN Teddy McCarthy galloped away from Blanco Bill and Katie, he proceeded at a headlong gait toward Last Lay-out; but he did not follow the wagon trail, as the same idea occurred to him that had to Mustang Monarch—namely, that it would be more prudent to reconnoiter the town from the rear.

Consequently, the old man rode directly toward the range, and thence continued along the base of the mountains, shielded from view by the *mottes* and bowlders.

The belief that he and the maiden had escaped the stampede, and that the latter had been captured by the supposed horse-thief, had infuriated the mob more than aught else; for they had been wild with delight at beholding the beautiful young girl, and had determined to make her the queen of the burg. When they perceived her in company with the stamper, they were greatly surprised; for she appeared to accompany him of her own accord, and indeed manifested a desire to shield and protect him.

The shots they had fired had not been in-

tended to go near her, for none in the party, intoxicated though they were, would have harmed a hair of her head.

They were all simply wild to induce her to enter Last Lay-out, and then their celebration would indeed be a grand affair.

This explains why the mob had been so furious when they had discovered the youthful pair together, and realized that both had a fair chance to escape; thus cheating them out of their lynch picnic, and also depriving them of their queen.

Had Teddy been captured by the on-rushing mob, the events recorded, and about to be recorded, would have been entirely different without doubt; for the stubborn old Irishman would have refused to guide the frenzied men, and then his life would have paid the forfeit. McCarthy was prudent, as has been mentioned, and he spent much time stealing toward the town, and fortunate it was for him that he was cautious, for he passed quite near the concealed outlaws of Capitan Christobal, who would have "scooped him in," had they discovered him.

After a time the old man reached the rear of the establishment of Alamo Abe; where, concealed from view, he listened intently in an endeavor to distinguish from the words of the "citz," something in regard to their feelings and intentions. But, such was the din that Teddy could make neither head nor tail of the ejaculations and mad yells that predominated.

"The devil a worruld of the Quane's English that's fit till spake before dacent people kin I hear!" muttered the old man. "May I sink in the bogs of Ballinasloe widout praste or prayer, if it isn't the haythenest place I was ever inside of! Upon me sowl, it w'u'd be a foine thing if there u'd be afther comin' a sigh-clown, as they calls thim, an' blow the whole batch o' thim to Ballyhack!"

"There's Mither Blanco Bill an' Miss Kathleen, both afther waitin' for me till come back, an' tell thim the koind of a reception they'd mate wid, an' how the devil am I till find out? But, be cripes, it's until the town I must go, even if the crazy devils will be afther draggin' me through that same; for it's the devil's own night entiorely, an' harrum moight come till Katie when Teddy's not wid her. God be betune us all an' all mischief."

As McCarthy spoke, he stole toward the Benzine Bazaar, and along in the shade of the same toward the street, soon peeping around the corner of the building. The sight that met his view was not of a character to cause him any relief of mind; just the opposite, for those of the citizens who had remained in the burg were a wrangling mob, and appeared to be greatly exasperated.

This the old man found out by their words, as they discussed the escape of the supposed horse-thief! They were also much excited in regard to the advent of a beautiful young woman in the town; but who had dashed accidentally into the herd of stampeding horses and been borne away amid the same—doubtless to be captured by that villainous nag-stealer, who seemed to carry on business by wholesale.

At times some were confident that their comrades would capture the thief and return with him, and also release the maiden and her protector. Then these would give utterance to doubtful expressions, and others would assert that they had been fooled all around, and would never set eyes on either of them again.

If Blanco Bill did return, Teddy felt positive, from the furious threats, that he would be hanged at once, and that Katie was greatly desired as a resident by the citizens of Last Lay-out—in fact, they would crown her queen of the burg, including her in the grand celebration.

Thus situated, the faithful old Irishman was at a loss what move to make, when he heard a heavy groan, which seemed to proceed from the interior of the building against which he was leaning.

Instantly examining the slabs, Teddy discovered a crack, through which he peeped, ascertaining that the interior was illuminated by candles in tin sconces upon the rough walls.

Almost immediately the old man gave a low ejaculation, which burst from his lips, in mingled horror and astonishment.

"Thunder an' turt! The murtherin' div-

ils! Sure, it's a deuce of a hole ye're in, Teddy McCarthy; an' begobs! it's hard tellin' if ye'll ever get out o' that same!

"Be the hole o' me coat, if they'd be afther killin' wan o' their own crowd, what w'u'dn't they do wid strangers? Bloody wars! what a sight for a famale, that is! Upon me sowl, it isn't the like o' meself that u'd bring purty Miss Katie among sich a batch o' haythin!"

The view that the old man had gained was indeed a strange and shocking one.

The large room was, as we have said, brilliantly illuminated, but not a man was moving about within the establishment. The form of Alamo Abe, whose head and face were covered with blood, was stretched upon the bar counter, he being motionless and apparently dead, although Teddy believed that the groan which he had heard proceeded from the corpse—it being perhaps the last sound uttered by him.

The watcher was greatly shocked and startled, as well as somewhat impressed with superstitious dread, a horrible fascination forcing him to gaze upon the blood-stained face of the gigantic Texan.

But not for any length of time, for, while yet the old man peered through the crack, at the ghastly sight within, the report of a revolver sounded from the street, and Teddy McCarthy fell to the earth, as if shot through the brain.

Several other flashes and shots followed, amid fierce yells and mad oaths, but no one approached the spot where lay the old Irishman, still and silent as a corpse, in the shade of Benzine Bazaar. It was evident that he had been struck by a random shot, intended for some other person.

In the street there was a rushing of whooping and yelling roysterers to the point from whence the reports had sounded, which was nearly opposite the establishment of Alamo Abe, the newly elected but senseless sheriff, who it was quite apparent was greatly needed in his official capacity at that moment. For two miners lay prone upon their backs in the dust of the street, their revolvers clutched in a death-grip, their soulless eyes fixed on the heavens—both gone to solve the Great Mystery!

Blood welled from wounds in the breasts of each, and an excited crowd gathered around the bodies.

Just then a bedlam of vengeful yells sounded from up the street to the north, and the score of "citz" who had gone in pursuit of the horse-thief appeared in view, all rushing madly into the burg, and all evidently greatly infuriated.

At once, the mass of the denizens of Last Lay-out, who had remained in the town, saw that the man they sought had not been captured; nor had the beautiful young lady been rescued from the stampede, as they confidently believed would have been accomplished.

When it thus flashed upon them, that they had been deprived of the "fun" connected with the lynching, which all had believed fully would be upon the night's programme; also, that the first woman—and she young and lovely—who had "struck" the town, had evidently been spirited away by the apparently lawless stranger; then, a terrific yell of vengeful fury shot simultaneously from every throat.

All rushed madly up the street, to meet their comrades, and ascertain the particulars connected with their having been defeated in the objects for which they had left the town.

Such was the fury of the demoralized "citz," that they lost all thoughts for the time of the little personal difficulty that had occurred among their number, and which had resulted in two untimely takings off; and the corpses of the pair of ill-starred miners were left, lying stark and stiffening in the dust of the street.

And, it so happened, that, at the very moment that the main portion of the residents of Last Lay-out discovered the return of those who had been in pursuit of Blanco Bill and Katie, and their yells of disappointment at the defeat of their object burst forth—at this very moment, a piercing shriek shot from amid the pines, in the rear of the line of shanties, which was unheard, or at least unnoticed by the howling mob.

The cry came from the lips of Katie Jordan; and our next chapter will explain fully the occurrences that followed almost directly

after the Mustang Monarch left the maiden in the *motte*, with none but Black Hawk and Calico to bear her company.

CHAPTER XX.

A CAPTURE AND A RESCUE.

AFTER leaving Katie Jordan in the pine *motte*, the young Texan made his way stealthily toward the rear of the next shanty, up the street, from Benzine Bazaar; following directly after Teddy McCarthy, although he was ignorant of that fact.

Had Blanco Bill and the maiden arrived at the *motte* five minutes sooner, the former would undoubtedly have discovered Teddy, the three would have been re-united, and much anguish and suffering have been avoided. In that case, there would have been no further occasion for them to linger in the vicinity of Last Lay-out, and they could have departed up the range in safety.

But the Fates decreed otherwise.

When McCarthy peered through the crack, near the front of the establishment of Alamo Abe, Blanco Bill, who was near the rear, and had also heard the deep groan that had attracted the Irishman's attention, also looked through a convenient knot-hole, and although not near the bar, was enabled to see the same ghastly sight that had appalled Teddy.

The young man had a very narrow escape from being discovered by the crouching bandits of Capitan Christobal, although he was not aware of the fact.

Had he known that the man he had exposed as a fraud, at the bull arena in El Paso, was lurking in the pines, with nearly a score of desperate followers—the same who had attempted his assassination, and afterward very nearly captured him—he would have been astounded, and forced to admit that the thirst for revenge on the part of Ronaldino Christobal knew no bounds. Most certainly, he would not have left his new-found idol, alone and unprotected, in the pine *motte*.

On account of the north side of Benzine Bazaar being shade, and from the fact that a clump of cacti grew near the wall of the building, between Blanco Bill and Teddy, neither of them was aware of the presence of the other.

And, when the report of the revolver sounded, the bullet from which dropped poor McCarthy to the earth, senseless and apparently dead, then Bill quickly gazed toward the street, and there witnessed the desperate shooting affray, which ended the lives of the two miners. He feared, at first, that the old Irishman was in some way connected with the shooting.

Of one thing he became convinced, if he had not ample occasion to be so previously; and that was that the denizens of Last Lay-out were in a fearfully demoralized state, through drink; which had, as he believed, already been the occasion of three deaths among their own number.

This did not promise any mercy or justice for outsiders, or strangers, who might come under their suspicion, or create their anger; and the Mustang Monarch was now doubly concerned on account of old Teddy.

He saw that the citizens and miners were in a state of frenzy, originating from intoxicants; and, from the fact that they had not been successful in capturing himself. Their yells, previous to the shooting, proved this.

Did he now show himself, Blanco Bill felt that there would be no hope—that the infuriated men of the burg would lynch him without listening to any explanation from him in connection with the stolen horses, which he had from force of circumstances ridden with into the town. Yet, for all this he was determined to rescue Teddy, if possible.

But every moment that he was forced to absent himself from the side of Katie was torture to him.

When the yells of the returning "citz" sounded from up the street, and the main body of the wild mob sped to meet them, then Blanco Bill was about to rush into and down the street in search of the old Irishman, when, like a red-hot shaft of steel, through his brain shot the terrified, despairing shriek of Katie Jordan, which sounded above the yells of the mob far up the street.

With bounds like those of a panther, his teeth set, and his eyes flashing, the young

man sped toward the *motte*, within which he had left the one he so much loved.

With senses strained, and an agonizing apprehension that tortured him to the very soul, and with his muscles nerved to double their usual strength—thus on, terrible in his anger and agony of mind, dashed the Mustang Monarch—on over clumps of cacti, and crashing through thickets, unconscious of the thorns that tore his clothing and flesh—thus, like an avenging god did he speed toward the *motte*, where he had left his darling Katie, his more than life!

Like a projectile from a catapult the young Texan shot into the dark shades, to be greeted by the welcoming neigh of Black Hawk, the horse standing at the north side of the *motte*, but not visible to his master.

The light spots upon Calico, however, were discovered even in that gloom.

Coming from the bright moonlight, Blanco Bill could not distinguish the outlines of the shaded scene before him.

He knew, however, that he stood upon the very spot where he had left his darling.

Panting for breath, his hands clinched about bowie and revolver, his muscles standing out in great knots, and his eyes staring in an agony of longing to behold her whom he so loved—thus for a moment stood the young Texan. But not a sound, except his own labored breathing, the whisking of the tails of the two horses, and the weird whispering of the pines, that seemed to him like the suppressed respiration of fiends who had torn his love from him, and were now enjoying his torture of soul.

Then out from the lips of Blanco Bill, in deepest anguish, shot the words:

"Katie! Oh, Katie Jordan! For the love of Heaven, answer me!"

It seemed as though the words, so appealingly shouted, reached the ears of her he so longed to find, for a gurgling outcry, half-smothered, came in faint response.

This sound came from the south, but a few yards distant, and indicated that Katie was in the power of ruffians, who prevented her struggling and roughly clapped their hands over her lips when she strove to call for assistance in her dire extremity.

This was terrible to the young man, and he tore through the screen of pines, and then in far-reaching bounds toward the point indicated by the faint cries.

But a few moments had he gone at this speed, when, straight before him, he discovered Katie Jordan being rudely dragged along between two most brutal-looking Greasers, she being forced to walk, each clutching her by an arm, while a third pushed her from behind.

With a furious bound, Blanco Bill reached the rear of the last-mentioned miscreant. He then saw that the maiden had a red kerchief fast bound about her head and over her mouth to prevent her giving an alarm.

The Mexicans, who were members of Christobal's band, knew not of the approach of the Mustang Monarch until too late to defend themselves against such a frantic enemy; in fact, the furious young Texan would have, just then, laid low a half-score of men unprepared for his headlong rush upon them. But, infuriated though he was, he thought of the probable danger that might be brought down upon him and his darling by the report of his revolver; and instantly, as he darted ahead, he thrust the weapon into its scabbard, and then, with a tremendous blow, felled the nearest Greaser to the earth.

The next instant, while yet his arm was drawn back to deal in like manner with the second, both Mexicans quickly whirled about with ejaculations of amazement and fury, not unmingled with fear, as the young Texan confronted them.

But before they could use their long knives, which they had jerked at the moment, the fist of Blanco Bill, with terrific force, smashed full in the face of the ruffian nearest him, who fell as though a bullet had pierced his brain.

With a loud cry of joy and thankfulness Katie Jordan sprung upon the breast of her lover, she having succeeded in slipping the bandage from her mouth.

The remaining Greaser, with a beast-like snarl, drew his revolver, but too late; for that very instant was the weapon of the Mustang Monarch drawn and leveled, as he quickly clasped his left arm about the waist

of Katie. The sharp crack of the revolver sounded on the night air, followed by a horrible yell from the outlaw, whose weapon exploded as he fell to the ground, his swarthy and villainous face contorted in death.

The death-cry of the Mexican, and the revolver-shot, seemed to have aroused a multitude, for rallying whoops now sounded, and the crashing of bush and branch proved the approach of enemies—sounds which were not unheeded by Blanco Bill.

"Courage, my darling!" he cried out. "I fear we are encompassed by merciless enemies; but I will save you, or die in the attempt!"

Lifting Katie in his arms, the poor girl shuddering with horror as she caught a sight of the repulsive face of the dead bandit, the young man ran as fast as was possible back to the *motte*; his senses strained, to detect danger at any point.

Wild and fearful whoops and yells still sounded from the street of Last Lay-out.

In their rear, no vocal sounds reached them; but the whisking of branches, and hasty footsteps upon the rocky soil, betrayed the fact that their foes were in hot pursuit. That the pistol-shot had been heard in the burg, Blanco Bill well knew; and conscious was he, that he and his darling were in deadly peril; although he was by no means hopeless of escape.

No sooner had he seen and recognized the abductors of Katie as Mexicans, than he knew that the bandit band which had chased him from the gorge had, in place of returning as he had supposed, remained near the town; evidently—when he considered the manner of the miscreants when in pursuit of him, that is, in not shooting him when they might easily have done so—having waited among the pines and boulders for an opportunity to capture him, and that for some reason or purpose, which was to him a mystery.

At once, upon reaching the *motte*, the young man placed his lovely charge upon her feet, and then hastily equipped both Calico and Black Hawk.

Then, again clasping his darling to his manly breast, and pressing a kiss upon her brow—at the same time seeking to cheer her with words of hope, the Mustang Monarch placed her in her saddle, and sprung into his own, exclaiming:

"Keep closely by my side, Katie; for we ride for liberty, perhaps for life—most assuredly for the last, in my case!"

"But, I'll fight to the death, if necessary. I'll not be taken, and hanged by the madmen of Last Lay-out, or the bandits of the Rockies!"

"May Heaven protect and help us!" was the prayerful, pleading cry of Kathleen Jordan, as she cast an upward glance; which, with the expression of her lovely face, was in keeping with her words.

Then, with the reins tightly gripped in his left hand, and his revolver in his right, Blanco Bill, ready to drive spurs and dash forward from the *motte* of pines, gazed a moment out from the fringe of foliage, and listened again to the mad yells that seemed to come from every side.

CHAPTER XXI.

PURSUIT AND CAPTURE.

"SPUR, Katie! Keep close by me. Straight on into the town is our only opening for escape!"

Such was the cry of Blanco Bill.

But a very short distance was it from the *motte* to the street of Last Lay-out, but the way was difficult and winding. The young Texan, with keen gaze, swept the view ahead, and upon both sides. Here and there could be seen stragglers from the mob flitting from thicket to thicket, and from behind the boulders, in their eager search for the parties who had fired the pistol.

The practiced ears of the Mustang Monarch, in the brief moment that he listened, detected some facts of which he decided to take advantage. At first, he had made up his mind to strike at once up the range, leaving the citizens and the bandits in his rear; but he found out directly, that escape in that way was cut off. He felt, however, that the outlaws, warned by the yells of the searching "citz," had given up the pursuit, and were now crouched in the thickets, for fear

of coming in contact with the people of Last Lay-out.

Consequently, as it appeared, there was no safer way of escape than by speeding directly into the town.

Not half the distance had our two friends passed between their starting-point and Benzine Bazaar, before they were discovered. Blanco Bill knew, from the sounds, that the mob were rushing headlong back to the street.

Not only this, but he feared that many of the "citz" had remained in the town; and his suspicions, in this respect, were soon proven true.

"Press on, Katie," he said; "we are surrounded, and must ride those in front of us down!"

Poor Katie was too terrified to utter a word.

Straight between Benzine Bazaar and the next shanty north of it, dashed our two friends. There seemed no avenue open to them, without being confronted by the liquor-maddened miners, who were infuriated at their failure to capture the supposed horse-thief.

The Mustang Monarch fully realized the position he was in, and, what was more, that in which Katie Jordan would be placed, were he to be killed; and more especially, should he be taken, and hanged like a dog.

Woe be to any who opposed him in his endeavor to escape, with the maiden he had so recently met, but whom he so deeply adored!

Thoughts flashed like wildfire through the minds of both, as their steeds dashed at terrific speed, between the shanty alluded to, and the hotel of Alamo Abe. The shadow of the latter building did not reach far from the base of its wall; and, ahead of the fugitives, directly across from the front corner of the shanty, stood a line of madly exultant miners, revolvers in hand, and barring the way of escape; their yells filling the air, and their liquor-inflamed faces stamped with a thirst for blood. While behind Blanco Bill and Katie, from amid the pines, rushed another party of the frantic "citz."

Completely hemmed in between the two buildings were the unfortunate pair.

Up went the arms of the young Texan, a deadly Colt's "six" in each hand, as he yelled:

"Clear the way there, or die in your tracks! I am white, and no horse-thief. Cowards! would you bar the way of a woman? Clear the way, I say, or die!"

A vengeful whoop of derision sounded in response. This seemed to be the signal for an instantaneous and startling change of scene; for at that moment Texas, the burro, galloped down the street, unobserved by the "citz," and bounded toward its mistress. In so doing, it plunged against the line of miners, overturning three or four; and, as they had fingers upon triggers, their revolvers exploded at, luckily, an angle of forty-five degrees, striking the earth just in front of Calico and Black Hawk.

Scarcely had these stunning reports sounded, when up from the ground sprung Teddy McCarthy and stood staggering, striving to maintain his footing by clinging to the slabs of Benzine Bazaar. The Irishman had regained consciousness, the bullet having merely glanced along his skull.

Instantly Katie Jordan caught sight of her old and faithful protector, whose face was covered with blood, and with a loud cry she turned Calico toward him.

While Blanco Bill was in the very act of turning Black Hawk up by the side of Calico, there to make a stand with Katie and Teddy, and battle in the fearfully unequal fight, the crack of revolvers again sounded, and he sunk senseless over the horn of his saddle, his steed coming to an instant halt.

What followed baffles description.

The young girl was as if paralyzed. She sat her horse, as if turned to stone; her eyes fixed in a horrified stare upon the senseless form of her lover.

At once Black Hawk was surrounded by the mob, who tore the form of his rider from the saddle.

"String ther condemned cuss up!"

"Hang ther hoss-snatcher!"

"Fetch a lariat!"

"Corral ther leetle gal!"

"Thar's another galoot. Mebbe so he's a pard o' ther hoss-thief!"

"Drag ther tenderfoot out!"

Such were the cries that rung from the demoralized mob.

The little burro trotted up to the side of Calico. Teddy staggered up also, shot-gun in hand, and called out to his young mistress:

"Sure Teddy McCarthy 'll die afore the divils 'll harrum yees! What does it all mane? Musha, but it's been the divil's own night entoirely. What'll come of us, I don't know?"

Katie still sat, dazed; evidently not hearing a word. She was, indeed, incapable of either voice or motion.

But, as the drunken crowd dragged her lover toward the street, and just as Teddy had ceased speaking, she suddenly recovered; uttering a piercing shriek as she drove spurs, and bounded toward the wrangling mob. At the same instant the old Irishman raised his gun and pulled trigger. A tremendous report followed, and Teddy, for the third time that night, fell senseless.

The discharge of the old man's gun, although the shot flew over the heads of the mob, causing them to pause suddenly, and Calico to spring frantically through them, had its own effect.

The sight of Blanco Bill being dragged along, while streams of blood ran down his brow and cheeks, was to Katie truly terrible!

She gave no thought now to Teddy, but with pistol leveled in firm grasp, she dashed up, forcing her horse directly into the midst of the surging, and fearfully cursing human tempest. Her black eyes fairly flashed.

Many of the miners, who were rushing on toward the street, their backs to the fast-galloping Calico, were hurled to the earth and trampled by the spur-maddened steed. A moment after Katie sprung from her saddle, directly into the crowd of would-be lynchers, and blazing right and left among those who clutched Blanco Bill, she cried out, in tones that caused them all to halt and become still on the instant:

"Cowards! dastards! You dare not face this man when he has his natural senses! Unloose him, and face a woman!"

Several were wounded by the daring and desperate maiden, and for a moment or two a hush fell upon that rough crowd; but the next, strong arms encircled her, and her lover, still senseless, was dragged onward.

At that juncture, from down the street, sounded the clatter of a rapidly advancing horse, and all saw a buckskin-clad form in the saddle. Up directly to the scene of confusion and excitement rode the strange horseman, until he gained a view of the face of their victim. Then he sprung from his saddle, jerked his revolvers and started forward, yelling, as he forced those who were dragging Blanco Bill along the street to unloose him, and stand back before his deadly tubes!

"Back, men of Last Lay-out! Are you all drunk or crazy? This man is as true as steel. It is Blanco Bill, the Mustang Monarch—and I'm his pard!"

"You know me, I suppose"—poking off his sombrero with one of his pistols—"I'm Grande George, an' I mean biz from the word jump. Yer hes got ter lay me out cold afore you h'ists this hyer pilgrim up a limb."

Teddy McCarthy, as it luckily chanced, had not quite such a heavy charge in his gun as on the previous occasion, and quickly revived.

Seeing Katie held by two of the mob, she having fainted dead away, the old Irishman rushed forward and caught her in his arms, his tears mingling with the blood upon his face, and his appearance so truly frightful and threatening that the miners shrunk away from him in wonder and dread.

Hardly had the words, that we have recorded, as having been yelled by Grande George, passed the lips of the scout, when out from Benzine Bazaar rushed Alamo Abe; his hair tangled, his eyes glaring wildly, and his face still bleeding.

In each hand, he held a presented revolver, while he called out, as he took in the strange and startling scene before him:

"Hold on, thar! This hyer thing hes gone es fur es hit's goin' ter. Yer thought yer'd lay me out cold, an' then run this burg jist es hit suited yee; but, dog-gone my

Texan heart, ef I ain't on deck, an' ready fer biz, on ther jump! Run me outen this circus, would yer? Waal, I should cackle!

"Yer 'lected me sheriff o' this locate, an' sheriff I bees, an' 'tends ter stick hyer."

"Pilgrims o' Last Lay-out, I'm runnin' this burg myself 'bout now, an' don't yer let hit 'scape yer mem'ries. Ye're a lively lot o' constitenters, er I'm ther boss liar!"

"What in thunderation's bin goin' on? Hev ther hull o' New Mex' busted? Jist gi'n me ther p'int, an' I'll play ther game through, es long es I kin stand in my cow-hides. Thet's me, Alermo Abe, ther Sheriff o' Last Lay-out! Ker-whoop! Ker-whoop! Wa-whoop!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE RAID OF THE OUTLAWS.

"KER-WHOOP! Wa-whoop!" repeated Alamo Abe, circling his revolvers around his head, his huge arms moving rapidly.

The moment the giant Texan ceased speaking, the voice of Grande George again rung out, clear and commanding:

"Come hyer, Alermo Abe. Dang my peepers ef I knowed yer! Reckon yer recom-menders an' ole pard, an'll listen ter Grande George, an' stan' up squar' fer my lingo. Jist meander this-a-way, an' ef ye're sheriff o' this hyer burg, straighten things up a bit!"

The Texan strode quickly to the side of the scout, and shook his hand warmly, as he returned:

"B'ile me down fer Piute soup, ef I ain't ormighty full o' glad ter meet yer, George; 'specially on sich a 'casion! But, cuss my cats, ef I knows jist 'zac'y what's up! I knows durn well I've been down flat on my back, though."

"Whar'd yer drap from, an' what's ther racket hyer that ye're chippin' inter?"

The startling events had happened so rapidly in succession, that even the demoralized mob all stood in their tracks.

Few there were, in the far Southwest, who had not heard of the Mustang Monarch, as the Texans were in the habit of calling William Williamson; for his reputation had spread far and wide. And Alamo Abe, although he had never seen the young man, had frequently spoken of him, since Last Lay-out had been "slapped up."

Consequently all were astonished at the assertion of Grande George, who also had an extended reputation in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, as a successful scout and trailer.

They had, in their half-crazed state, been about to hang the man, who undoubtedly was far from being a horse-thief; indeed, one with his reputation would not need to steal animals, thus jeopardizing his life.

These thoughts flashed through the minds of the "citz" of Last Lay-out; for it had been some time since they had taken a drink of Abe's whisky, and meanwhile they had exerted themselves greatly. All this went far toward sobering them.

But the great event of the night was yet to come. This was one that was strange and unaccountable, one that would cause them all to feel the deepest humiliation and anger; besides implanting in them an almost insane desire to prove by their acts how deeply they regretted having so wronged the "Boss Buc-caro," and terrified the beautiful young girl who had entered their town in so strange a manner.

Some of the miners, nearest to the senseless form of the young Texan, as soon as they recovered from their amazement, gently lifted and supported him; Grande George, as he relinquished the hand of Alamo Abe, proceeding to answer the questions of the latter, as he examined Blanco Bill to ascertain the nature of his wounds.

"I'm from the Grande, ole pard, an' hit 'pears I roved jist in time; er your folkses w'd ha' strung up one o' ther whitest humans I ever parded with. Who shooted him? An' dog-gone hit, what in ther name o' Crockett hev yeou boyees got ag'in' ther Mustang Monarch?"

"An' thet ain't all I wants ter know. I jist seed a mashed up ole pilgrim tote a purty piece o' caliker inter Benzine Bazaar. Who air he, an' who air she, an' what air ther difficult wi' her? Hit 'pears es though ther hull o' yer hed gone plum luny-fied."

"Does hit take ther hull burg ter make

one pilgrim wilt, an' skeer a purty leetle gal half ter death? Can't none o' yer 'splain matters?"

Teddy McCarthy had borne Katie into the establishment of Alamo Abe, without being hindered by any of the "citz;" indeed some of the miners volunteered to assist him, but the old man repulsed them angrily.

Teddy had about come to the conclusion that the world was liable to explode at any moment—that the "ould divil himself" ruled that particular night—and, as there seemed a favorable opening, he resolved to find some secure spot in which he could place his precious charge, and if possible prevent her from witnessing any more "divilment!" Besides this, the old Irishman made up his mind that he would again load up his gun; and, if it was the last act of his life, blaze away at the next man who molested Katie.

As for Blanco Bill, McCarthy believed, from the few words he caught after the arrival of the scout, that the former was safe from further harm; yet, for all that Teddy knew to the contrary, the young man might be already dead.

But, to return to the street.

There were now fully sixty men in the crowd, although it was somewhat scattered; but none were far removed from the spot where stood Grande George and Alamo Abe; the former, when he last spoke, being engaged in examining the wound of his pard.

"He ain't hurted."

"Jist stunned."

"Ther lead skipped off his cabase."

These assertions came from those who had picked Blanco Bill from the ground.

"I'm ormighty glad o' thet, boyees," said Grande George.

"An' so 'm I!" put in Abe. "Jist b'ar in mind thet I'm sberiff, an' hit w'u'd ha' bin a nasty ole kittle o' fish, ef ther boyees hed hung him up ter dry, while I war laid out wi' nary a idee in my mashed cabase. Hev thar bin a cyclone, er war I struck by light-nin'?"

This question of Alamo Abe, addressed to the nearest miner, was destined not to be answered, for, almost instantly was the scene transformed, the assemblage being the most dumfounded, demoralized, and broken-up crowd in the territory. For, hardly had the last word passed the lips of the Texan, when a piercing and peculiar yell rung through the night air from the vicinity of the crowd.

Before this had ceased to echo amid the cliffs, out from behind the shanties that stood just north of the assemblage, shot nearly a score of mounted men; all immediately galloping in a long line, at terrific speed, down the street, and uttering the wildest yells. Before the crowd, in the front of Benzine Bazaar, could recover from their astonishment, spurts of fire shot from the deadly tubes of the strange horsemen, and a hail of lead lurled through the ranks of the "citz" of Last Lay-out.

Had a party of mounted men fallen from the sky upon them, the citizens would not have been more amazed. So dazed were they, that, for a moment, none of them were capable of exerting themselves in any way.

This, the effect upon them of the liquor they had drank, had been anticipated by the invaders of the burg, who had been waiting for the present opportunity, and thus insured the accomplishment of their object.

Not one in the crowd had any knowledge of the new-comers, with the exception of Grande George; and he had not the remotest idea that they would dare enter Last Lay-out. The scout knew they were the band of Capitan Christobal, and that the latter must have followed the Mustang Monarch from Franklin, for the purpose of murdering him.

George had followed the trail, and had discovered the corpses of the Greasers who had been slain by Blanco Bill, and then trampled upon by the stampede. He was now so amazed, as was also Alamo Abe, that not an order was given to favor defense.

Down, like an avalanche, came the bandits, with fierce yells in both Spanish and English.

Miners fell to the earth, and writhed in the agonies of death; some being maimed by the hoofs of the outlaws' horses.

Powder, smoke, sulphurous smell, and the taint of blood filled the air; Grande George recovering, as did Abe, and both blazing

away lively. But this was of little avail. The next moment, the Mexicans were in the midst of the congregated citizens their steeds snorting wildly in their fright.

In an instant Blanco Bill was torn from the arms of those who were supporting him and thrown across the saddle-bow of Ronal-dino Christobal; who, with a fiend-like cry of exultation, dashed on at the front of his followers and down the street.

Only four or five of the bandits fell before the bullets of Alamo Abe, Grande George, and a number of the "citz," who had recovered themselves in time to draw weapons, and blaze into the outlaw band.

Then the baffled and demoralized men of Last Lay-out, with frantic rage and a thirst for revenge ruling them, saw Christobal and his Greaser gang dart from the town, and among the pines and bowlders, disappearing from view down the range toward the great gorge and the Mexican frontier.

With them, they bore away to torture and death, William Williamson, or Blanco Bill, the Mustang Monarch.

The revenge of the South American seemed likely to be accomplished.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN BENZINE BAZAAR.

THE excitement in Last Lay-out after the charge and retreat of the bandits, taking with them the Mustang Monarch, was most intense.

Alamo Abe was at first at a loss what was to be done; but he at length, while raging about among the "citz," flourishing his pistols, hit upon a plan to bring the miners around to "biz." This he immediately put in operation, by running, with whoops, directly toward his establishment, halting at the front entrance. He knew that some time had elapsed since the denizens of the burg had "irrigated."

"Come up, you dry pilgrims!" he shouted; "an' pour down some bug-juice. Alermo Abe air treatin' ther hull crowd!"

"Hurrah fer ther sheriff!"

Thus yelled Grande George, who at once understood the Texan's object.

All now ran pell-mell toward Benzine Bazaar. Abe sprung over the bar, and set out all the bottles and glasses in the establishment.

The crowd rushed inside almost as wildly and frantically as when they had rushed out at the sound of the stampeding herd.

Grande George sprung upon the bar as soon as the "citz" had drank, and cried out:

"Pards o' the plains an' mountains! I hez a few lingo tersling et yer. I war in El Paso with Blanco Bill when he showed up ther Greaser Champion o' South 'Merica a few suns ago. I foun' out, arter my pard hed struck out North thet ther cuss Christobal, hed gut a crowd o' Greasers, an' hed levanted inter New Mex' on ther trail o' my pard."

"I lunged out an' follered ther cut-throats, an' foun' out thet they hed struck a small party o' Paches, wiped them out. all 'ceptin' one, an' tuck ther nags what ther reds hed stoled down-country. They driv ther animles up ther range ter a gorge below hyer, whar ther Mustang Monarch hed camped."

"I foun' out my pard had got away with two on 'em, but somehow er 'nother got in 'mong ther nags, which levanted up-range toward this hyer burg—ther hull pack o' Greasers arter him."

"Ther yaller cusses hev bin layin' low in ther pines. Now yer knows ther hull story. What's bin goin' on hyer, I doesn't know, but I'm incernated ter s'pose thar's bin a bit o' caliker mixed in wi' ther crooked doin's; an' yeou pilgrims hev 'bout skeered her ter death, 'sides bein' 'bout ter jark my pard up a limb."

"Now, I calls on yer ter go wi' Grande George an' Alermo Abe, an' jist everlastin'ly wallop ther Greasers, ef we hes ter foller them clean ter Ole Mex'. That's what I'm warblin'!"

"Whoop up fer ter resky Blanco Bill, ther bestest sort o' a pilgrim, an' what Grande George air proud ter call his pard! Sot 'em up ag'in, Abe, an' chalk 'em down ter me, ther Chap'rell Cock o' ther Upper Bravo!"

Deafening whoops resounded through Ben-

zine Bazaar, and the building shook from the stamping of cowhide boots, and huge fists pounding upon the bar.

We will here branch on a "side trail," to explain matters pertaining to Katie Jordan and Teddy McCarthy. The latter had carried the young lady into the hotel, she being still limp and senseless.

And no wonder was it that the poor girl had lost all consciousness, considering all that she had witnessed and the scenes in which she had taken a part.

Surrounded by those rough and liquor-maddened men, who thirsted for the blood of the man to whom she had given her young heart's affections—surrounded, as it seemed, by death, and expecting it at every moment; then beholding Teddy tottering by the shanty, wounded and bleeding, and the next instant seeing her lover sink, apparently dead, upon the neck of his horse, while men with brutal passions stamped upon their faces rushed, weapons in hand, to make sure of their cowardly work—was it strange that she strove first to defend Blanco Bill, and that then all sense should vanish in despair?

The devoted Teddy well knew that his lovely charge would soon revive, as he seated her upon a chair which he kicked against the inside rear slabs of Benzine Bazaar, and then supported her head as tenderly as a mother would that of a child.

Then it was that Texas, the burro, walked slowly into Benzine Bazaar, gave one rather indifferent glance ahead as if to convince himself that he was on the right trail, then half-closed his eyes and advanced, with his huge ears flopping loosely; the animal's whole appearance, manner and gait seeming to speak plainly to the effect that he considered the "circusing" of the night had gone on long enough—that such doings were "played out," and stale even to disgust.

There were no manifestations in connection with "Texas" which indicated that even a "lynch picnic" or a cut-and-slash general fight, would have the slightest interest in his eyes; and as he came nearer to his mistress, he gave what seemed a contemptuous glance at the battered head of the Irishman, which seemed to imply that the beast considered the latter an old fool for having allowed his gun to get the best of him.

Teddy was delighted at the appearance of the burro, which he considered had "a dale more sinse than many a Christian."

When the animal came in, the old man blew out the candle at the corner where he had decided to make his stand. To the din in the street he had not given a second thought—indeed, he only wished that the "haythen divils" would continue thus to amuse themselves until Katie revived, and he could escape from the town with her.

So affected had the poor old fellow been by all the excitement through which he had gone, that until the advent of "Texas" he had not realized that he was in a bar-room; and when he did he at once led the burro up close beside the chair upon which he had placed Katie, and reclined the maiden against the animal, well knowing that the animal would not stir a peg.

Indeed, the beast, for the first time since dashing against the line of "citz," manifested some little life, interest and energy; appearing to be affected by the strange appearance of his mistress, who was usually so kind to him.

The burro pricked his ears and turned his head around, opening his eyes wide. He then gently rubbed his muzzle over the head of Katie, the pair presenting a very impressive picture.

McCarthy stopped a moment to listen, as it happened just at the time the bandits charged down into the crowd of citizens, shooting rapidly.

"Thunder an' turf! What in the devil's goin' an' now?" muttered the old man, in fresh astonishment, as he stared toward the front of the large apartment.

"Faix, an' I war afther thinkin', begebbs, that the haythens w'u'd squat an' rest a bit; but be the hole in my coat—an', be cripes, there's many a wan o' thim by this time!—the ould boy is goin' on again out beyant!"

"Upon me sowl, I w'u'dn't care a cint if they'd put in big whacks an' strokes wid their knives, an' shoot away till they're all kilt entoirely! Sure, if they had guns like

me own, an' fed thim as well, I'm afther thinkin' the foight w'u'dn't last long.

"May the saints presarve Misther Blanco Bill, an' stan' betune us an' all harum! Now, Taxis, d'ye moind yer mistress for a minit; for, be the powers o' Moll Kelly, I smell whisky, an' if ever Teddy McCarthy stud in nade of the craythur, it's jist now. Why the devil didn't I think of it afore?"

"Sure a drap w'u'd make Miss Katie herself all roight; an' it's a could chill it gives me to luck at her, the way she's in. D'ye moind, Taxis, I'm afther a drap o' the craythur!"

Thus speaking, the Irishman tip-toed to and behind the bar; clutching a bottle, which he glued to his lips, and of which he drank deeply, with most evident satisfaction. Replacing it, he grasped another, which he smelled, satisfying himself, in that way, that its contents were more suitable for the purpose of resuscitating Katie.

He also secured some bread, from beneath the bar, which he gave to Texas; the animal masticating the same with the air of a connoisseur.

Teddy lost no time in placing the nozzle of the brandy bottle to the lips of Katie; but, at that very moment, Alamo Abe sprung to the threshold of the front door, and yelled out to the crowd, as has been recorded—the Texan then bounding over the bar, and the "citz" rushing in, furiously as ever.

"Bad 'cess till the haythens! Here they are, an' be cripes I bel'ave there's not one missin'! To the devil wid the whole clutch! Sure, they'll frighten Miss Katie again, but be this an' be that, if they do, Teddy McCarthy's the b'y that'll give them a taste of a rale ould Irish foight!"

"Upon me sowl, I'll be afther fadin' me gun again when Katie recovers, for it lucks like I'll need it, be gobs!"

So saying, the old man poured some of the brandy between the maiden's lips. He then bathed her head gently with the liquor.

"Texas," at the entrance of the "citz," attracted by the noise, turned about, facing the bar; still chewing the bread, and evidently indignant at the revival of the obnoxious "circus."

As Grande George began his speech, Katie opened her eyes. She was, at first, unable to recall the near past, and gazed wildly at the crowd.

"Don't moind thim," said Teddy, in a low and assuring tone. "Sure they're a batch o' haythens entoirely, but ould Teddy 'll stand betune ye an' all harrum, an' Taxis kin kick like the divil! Kape still now, an' be gobs they'll not see us at all, at all, I'm thinkin'. It's lucky I blew out the candle. Hould an a bit, till I fade me gun, if it does be afther smashin' me hid like it done the last time."

"Hus-s-sh!" came softly from the young girl's lips, as she grasped Teddy by the shoulder, and arose to her feet; staring at Grande George, and listening intently.

Almost instantly, she had taken in her position, and recalled the near past; recalled, with it, the fact that Blanco Bill, or William Williamson, as she last saw him, was wounded, or dead, she knew not which, and being dragged by the drunken and desperate mob, to be hanged!

As this scene came up before her, she would have cried aloud in her anguish, had she not caught the words of the scout.

Teddy listened also, as he "fed his gun," and muttered:

"Thank the Lord, thin, Misther Blanco Bill wasn't kilt entoirely! But, be gobs, if he's bin tuck be worse haythens than thim beyant, I w'u'dn't give a ha'p'orth for his skin!"

The Irishman having extinguished the candle, he and his fair companion were in a dim light, which prevented the "citz" from noticing them; although they would have been distinctly seen, had the miner recalled the fact, that the strange old man had conveyed the maiden into Benzine Bazaar, and looked around in search of them.

They were not long to remain unobserved, however; for, when the "citz" yelled in chorus, stamping the floor, pounding the bar, and creating a fiendish din, "Texas" seemed maddened beyond control, at having his quiet thus disturbed, and opening his mouth, gave utterance to one of his peculiar long-drawn and piercing squeals. This, in

that low-studded apartment sounded truly terrific; and, coming at the moment that the "citz" ceased their yells, sounded like an echo.

The result was, that the eyes of the whole crowd became at once fixed upon the burro, in amazement—Teddy McCarthy, who had "fed" his gun, standing with the weapon presented, a threatening and defiant expression upon his battered and bloody face; he, forming with the pale and startled Katie Jordan, a strange and impressive tableau.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHRISTOBAL AND HIS CAPTIVE.

WELL knew the outlaw chief, when he made the charge upon the "citz" of Last Lay-out, that, before they could recover from their astonishment, and organize in pursuit of his band, he could place a long distance between himself and them. But, he knew it would be madness to strike out from the range on the open plain, until the early part of the following night; for, they would be, not only in danger of meeting parties of miners on the stage road, or soldiers from the forts, but because the pursuers could see them for many miles.

Consequently, the only course open, was to speed down the range, and encamp in some gulch that would be easy to defend against numbers; and there await the favorable time to make a start toward Mexico, the following night.

To this conclusion had come the bandit leader, while impatiently awaiting with his band, in the pines, near the rear of the shanties, for an opportunity to dash into the street, and capture the man whom he so hated.

Even should he lose three-fourths of his men in the attempt, Christobal resolved upon a desperate dash for revenge, and to possess himself of the longed-for secret of the young Texan; a secret which, once his, he felt assured would enable him to gain untold gold, as well as great renown, in Mexico and South America.

When the three Greasers, who were at the northern extremity of his line of men, had captured Katie Jordan, they were so elated that they gave no signal of their success. They had received no orders to that effect—indeed, they knew nothing of the presence of the maiden—but they looked for a rich reward from their chief nevertheless.

However, one of them had been slain outright, and the other two rendered insanely furious for revenge.

Upon the main portion of the band having reached the spot where their comrades lay, they at once rushed forward, and Captain Christobal got a sight of his hated rival and Katie, as the two rode toward the street. But he was forced to order his men to "lay low," as the "citz" were then searching the pines, and he knew that he and his gang would be doomed were they discovered.

But no sooner had the "citz" rushed toward the street, and he saw that his enemy was about to fall into their hands, than he ordered his men to make ready at once for a charge.

Christobal and his followers had not the remotest idea why the denizens of Last Lay-out held enmity toward Blanco Bill; in any event, however, they were determined not to lose their long-sought game.

Several of their number had been slain by this Texan, and others were still suffering from wounds received at his hands. In consequence the most intense hatred toward the Mustang Monarch ruled the breasts of all the band of Ronaldino Christobal.

Their chief knew this, and felt anxious on that account; for he feared he would not have sufficient control over his vengeful followers to prevent them from killing his enemy before he had wrung his secret from him.

At once, therefore, upon securing the young Texan, Christobal ordered three of his men to gallop around the town and head the stampeding animals, the loss of which he knew had increased the rage and discontent of the band.

The outlaw leader was filled with a devilish and insane joy at having slain a number of the miners, for this circumstance would cause his followers to be less furious for revenge upon the Mustang Monarch, and more ready to obey him in all things, as their very lives depended upon him. Without an in-

telligent leader, they could not hope to escape to Mexico.

Having shot down so many Americans, the bandits would know that pursuit would be immediate and that, by a most desperate and merciless body of men. All things considered, Capitan Christobal felt little doubt in regard to the complete accomplishment of his object.

He resolved to speed down the range to the great gorge, pass up the same, and select a point easy to defend; to remain there until the following night, and during this necessary delay at the gorge, to torture the secret from his enemy, and then deliver him over to the tender mercies of his men.

Upon reaching the first cover of pines, Blanco Bill was taken from the arms of the exultant Christobal by two Greasers, and bound fast, hand and foot, besides being gagged. By this time the young man had revived, and he was placed astride of a horse, whose owner had been shot by the "citz," his ankles being secured beneath the belly of the animal. This was quickly accomplished and then all mounted, spurring from the foot-hills and *mottes* until on the border of the plain; when, away down the range sped the outlaw band, Christobal himself clutching the neck-ropes of the mustang upon which Blanco Bill was bound—the face of the South American filled with the triumph of a demon, his black eyes glaring hatred the most intense and deadly, his teeth set, and his thin and almost bloodless lips curling upward and downward.

Hatred and a thirst for blood shot from the snake-like eyes of all the outlaw gang, upon the Mustang Monarch, who realized fully that he was as helpless as an infant; held captive by men who knew no mercy, and who were as treacherous as the Apaches of the Pecos!

For, no longer was it a mystery to the young man, why he had been thus sought for and captured at the risk of life, and probably at the cost of lives; as he had at once, upon recovery, recognized the "Champion Horse Educator of South America," and knew that this man must have secured the services of a band of desperate outlaws, and thus had followed his trail through New Mexico.

But Blanco Bill had no idea that Christobal had any other object than revenge—knew not that it was their intention to torture him until he made known the secret of his power over the equine family.

In fact, our young friend gave little thought to his own dangerous position; for his very soul was agonized, when the image of Katie Jordan rose up before him.

Where was she?

Could it be possible that the mad mob in Last Lay-out had slain her, in their frantic fury, born of intoxication?

If not, was she, that angelic maiden, at the mercy of such men?—men, who, without cause or occasion, had condemned him to an ignominious death by the rope?

Blanco Bill recollected that he and Katie had been hemmed in between the two shanties, and that she, just at the time that he had had good grounds to hope for escape, had perceived poor Teddy, in his forlorn condition.

He remembered also, that he had spurred Black Hawk to one side, to defend Katie and Teddy; having refrained from shooting at the miners, for he knew there would be no hope for them, if he killed one of the "citz."

Never was a man more deeply anguished, than was the young Texan, by the uncertainty of the maiden's safety, and the terrible possibilities conjured up by his excited imagination. Not for a moment, did he entertain the slightest hope that he himself would be rescued by the citizens of Last Lay-out. Indeed, he felt relief, upon recovering his senses, that he had escaped from that insane mob—escaped death by the rope—although he found himself in the power of Ronaldino Christobal, whose presence in New Mexico, and whose object, were undoubtedly his capture, and death. He had escaped death by the rope, only to meet it from the *cuchillos* of the murderous marauders of Mexico!

But, as the horde dashed on through the moonlight, parallel with the towering, rocky range, and the young Texan pondered upon his probable fate, he became most desperate, vowing that he would not die thus, by the

hands of these yellow-skinned miscreants—that he would again gaze into the limpid eyes of Katie Jordan, if she yet lived!

And on, down the range, sped the galloping horde of outlaws, exultant in the thoughts that they had slain some of the detested Americans, and had recklessly charged through Last Lay-out, a deed of which they would often boast in the days to come.

Still on they dashed, even the strong and sinewy frame of Blanco Bill becoming weak from fatigue, deprivation of food and sleep, and continuous action and excitement. His brain was seething at times, as if molten lead filled his skull, when dread thoughts in regard to his darling Katie, whose fate was a mystery, came up as they constantly did, before him. A mystery, too, seemed his own escape from the mad lynchers, and his presence as a captive in the band commanded by Ronaldino Christobal.

Weakened physically and demoralized mentally, by the torture born of his thoughts, yet, for all that, the Mustang Monarch did not despair of escape, although there seemed no possible way of escape open.

He was thankful that he had been spared from the rope, and he prayed earnestly that he might again be permitted to see his darling and clasp her to his heart.

Under no circumstances, considering all the startling and tragic events that had been crowded into that single night—considering that all his hopes and aims, that his very life had been changed completely and entirely through his meeting with Kathleen Jordan, and all ending thus, in a prospect, indeed a probability, of near death by the knives of the miscreant Mexicans—it was a wonder that the young man retained his senses, and that he was capable of planning or acting in the attempted escape, which he vowed to accomplish.

And this although he had not the remotest idea in what manner it was to be brought about. In fact he dared not dwell in thought upon the subject, lest he should give up in hopeless despair.

Anxiously and impatiently he awaited the end of that terrible, torturing gallop which he prayed would place him in a position more favorable to effect his escape from the fiends who held him.

CHAPTER XXV.

WOMAN'S COURAGE AND DEVOTION.

KATIE JORDAN had been in a half-dazed state upon beholding the rough crowd at the opposite end of the long apartment. But at once, upon hearing the name of her lover spoken by Grande George, all the dread scenes through which she had so recently passed, returned in all their vividness. She stood spellbound, listening with a painful intensity to each and every word of the scout, and soon became convinced that the rough men, who were but just now insanely bent on lynching her lover, were now friendly to him.

But when she listened further, and learned that while she had been in an unconscious state a band of outlaws had charged through the town and borne her lover away captive, the poor girl was plunged back into the depths of despair. She recalled the explanation of Blanco Bill of his having been in the midst of the stampeding herd of horses, of his attempted assassination, and his escape. That the gang who had chased him up the range were the same who now held him in their power, the maiden had no doubt.

Katie also felt sure that the Mexicans who had abducted her from the pine *motte* were also of the same band.

From these conclusions she decided that not only had the bandits some strong enmity against the young Texan, but that they were now doubly infuriated from the fact that he had slain one of their number and injured two others while the gang were prowling near the town.

It appeared, indeed there seemed no doubt, that in spite of all this vengeful feeling on the part of the outlaws, they refrained from shooting the young man when they might easily have done so, but had risked much to capture him.

Did not this indicate that they intended to condemn Blanco Bill to a lingering death?

So it seemed to Katie Jordan.

Even though pursuit were made immedi-

ately, and the bandits in time overtaken, would not then the merciless wretches, having her lover in their power, murder him before the very eyes of his would-be rescuers?

In so strange a state of mind was our heroine, that some of the explanations of Grande George were not, when spoken, understood; but they returned to her mind later on, and she saw the reason of Christobal's hatred for Blanco Bill. The South American had followed him from Mexico, and would not be foiled in his revenge.

The young girl stood as if paralyzed by her emotions, clutching the tattered sleeve of Teddy McCarthy when "Texas" gave his unearthly shriek, and the old Irishman leveled his gun toward the dumfounded crowd of "citz."

This was the impressive tableau that was presented to the view of the men of Last Lay-out, who had in a measure recovered their natural senses through the effects of the recent startling and tragic occurrences. Only for a moment did the crowd remain silent. Then every sombrero was snatched from head and whirled in the air, while Alamo Abe called out:

"Three rippin' ole he cheers an' a ker-whoop fer ther fu'stest leetle female 'oman what hev struck Last Lay-out, an' ther purtiest piece o' caliker in New Mex'!"

And Benzine Bazaar fairly trembled to its foundation, when the cheers were given.

But before they were half-yelled, Grande George sprung from the bar, and sombrero in hand, strode toward Katie and Teddy. By this time the latter had gotten through his pate that there was no harm intended to either of them; indeed, he was forced to conclude, although it amazed him, that this recently crazed mob were not only well disposed toward them, but actually friendly.

Consequently McCarthy lowered his gun, and leaned on the same as the scout approached.

"Scuse me, miss," said Grande George, in the softest tone he could command; "but I reckon yer won't be sot back by a stranger spokin' ter yer when yer 'pears ter be needin' frien's, bein' in strange parts."

"I hev bin tole thet yer war wi' my pard, ther Mustang Monarch, an' I s'pose yer air feelin' sorter bad arter l'arnin' thet he hev bin tuck by a pack o' Greasers, led by Cap Christobal, what pertends ter be ther boss hoss-ly o' South 'Merica."

"My pard didn't whisper a word ter me 'bout 'speakin' ter strike a lady hyeraways; an' ef he hed, I'd tole him hit warn't 'zactly squar' fer him ter hev yer meet him in this wile oncivilized locate. He's bin tuck an' toted off down-range; but don't yer worritate yerself, fer Grande George hev follered his trail clean from Franklin, an' he don't 'low ter be bamboozled by nary Greaser lay-out. Waal, I should perceed ter snicker!"

"Reckon yer doesn't know me, miss? I'm Grande George, ther Chap'rell Cock o' ther Bravo; an' any pilgrim what I catches gazin' cross-eyed et yer purty pictur', I'll salervate him! I'm goin' just a-b'ilin' arter ther Mustang Monarch es soon es I kin git ther boyces all sot an' ready. I ain't eddicated much, an' can't sling XXX 'Nited States lingo; but I means what I does manage ter say an' I ain't slow when slashers an' shooters is trumps."

"I'm in this game es long es thar's ha'r on my head, er I've gut ther stren'th ter crook a finger 'roun' a trigger. You hear me warble?"

The scout was excited, and much concerned in regard to Blanco Bill, as well as being much embarrassed at being in the presence of a lovely young girl, whose bright eyes were fixed upon his honest face. The situation was new and strange to him, but he had just so much to say, and he was bound to get through with it as quickly as possible, and this could only be done by rattling off his words at once, without stopping to consider whether they were the proper ones to be used in the presence of a lady.

As for Katie, she was both relieved and rejoiced to meet one who had been a friend of her lover; and she had heard the language of the rough men of the border so much since she had left Denver that not only did she understand all that the brave frontiersman said, but she did not manifest the least surprise at his somewhat uncouth ways and speech.

"May God bless you!" she exclaimed, as

she caught the scout's hand in both her own. "You do not know, you cannot imagine, how happy I am to meet a friend of Blanco Bill, as you call Mr. Williamson. He did not know I was to be in this section of the country."

Katie Jordan hesitated here.

She did not wish any one to know that she had met the young Texan that night for the first time. She did not think it was necessary to do, and her wish now was, situated as she found herself, to have these men believe that she had long been known to William Williamson. In such strange and perplexing circumstances, it appeared to her a real necessity to manifest a strong regard and affection for Blanco Bill.

Had not this been the case, she could not have controlled her emotions, feeling that her very life depended upon him who was in the power of those pitiless bandits.

Katie paused a moment, and then continued.

"Blanco Bill informed me that his life had been attempted, some ten miles down the range from this town. We both have had some strange and startling adventures in this vicinity, this terrible night. I should have been killed, or captured, by an Indian, up the range, had it not been for my brave old protector here, Teddy McCarthy."

The latter made an awkward bow at this point, considering himself to have been introduced.

"But," continued the maiden, "we must not waste time in explanations. Can we not start at once? I fear they will kill him!"

"Teddy,"—to the old man—"please lead Calico to the door. I do hope he has not been taken away."

Grande George opened wide his eyes in amazement, exclaiming, as the Irishman elbowed his way through the crowd to the door:

"What's thet, Miss—"

"My name is Katie Jordan," interrupted the young girl.

"Scuse me, but kin I call yer Katie? I doesn't hev time, most allers, ter sling ther hull biz."

"Certainly you may," was the reply, "I know you are a good man, or Blanco Bill would not have called you his friend. I know you will protect me, and do all you can for Mr. Williamson."

"I'm ormighly proud ter be yer friend, Katie," said the scout. "But, es I war 'bout ter ax, yer doesn't perpose ter glide 'long on this hyer trail yerself I hopes?"

"Indeed I dol!"

"Waal, ef thet doesn't just sot me back! Great Crockett! Yer mought git shooted, 'sides I reckon yer needs ter rest, an' git some sleep."

"I swan yer'd better stop hyer in Last Lay-out, an' let me an' ther boyces run this racket on ther jump. Alermo Abe'll fix up some sort o' lay-out fer yer, an' slap up some grub. Do now, fer I shell be worritated ef yer goes 'long with we-'uns!"

"I thank you, George, but my mind is fully made up. I should be in torture if I remained. Come, please, and escort me to the door. I have a horse that is fleet and strong, and I am well armed."

"Great Jehoss-i-phat!"

Grande George drew a long breath, and then yelled:

"Cl'ar ther track, boyces! Hyer's ther Queen o' New Mex', an' she's goin' on ther trail wi' we-'uns. Pards, this air Katie, ther Queen o' ther Rockies; an' any galoot what doesn't tip his cabase-cover when she gazes et him 'll git salervated by Grande George, ther Chap'rell Cock o' ther Bravo!"

Calico was now led to the door by Teddy, and a hearty round of cheers came from the miners.

The scout sprung into his saddle.

Katie, ever considerate, requested McCarthy to remove the pack from "Texas."

Alamo Abe engaged a wounded man to attend to Benzine Bazaar, and then appeared, well mounted, among the "citz."

The old Irishman, refusing to listen to advice from any one, mounted his horse, and stationed himself near his young mistress; but as was evident to the latter more than to the others, he was far from being in a fit condition for the trail. In fact, Teddy was nearly broken down, from wounds, excitement, and privation. He had nothing to

say, except to swear by the Holy Poker, he'd "stick till Miss Katie as long as he c'd kape wan eyelid open the length of a hair!"

Some of the miners had collected all the horses and equipped them; and, at the order of Alamo Abe, all who had beasts mounted, making up a party of twenty, exclusive of Abe, George, Teddy, and Katie Jordan.

"All set?" asked the sheriff, in a loud, hoarse voice.

"All hunk!" came the answer, along the line.

"Job spurs! Git!" was the next order; and away, down the range, led by Grande George, galloped the pursuers; the miners all armed to the teeth, and riding in pairs.

No trail was followed, the scout proceeding by his judgment; and, as he knew every inch of that section of the country, there was little doubt of his failing in "spotting" the lurking-place of the bandits.

The same reasoning that governed Capitan Christobal, led Grande George to decide the marauders would avoid the plain, seek some gulch or gorge easy to defend, and encamp. This, he felt, would be at no great distance from Last Lay-out.

Indeed, the scout was almost positive that Christobal would not pass south of the great gorge, in which Blanco Bill had slain the two assassins.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LET THEM DO THEIR WORST.

BLANCO BILL had hoped, all through that headlong gallop down the range, that the bandits would turn out upon the open plain.

Had Capitan Christobal thus ordered his ruffianly horde, the young Texan would have had some grounds for hope in regard to a rescue.

But no such change of course was made.

The Mustang Monarch also noticed that Christobal had followed for some distance the trampled trail that had been made by the stampeding horses. He took advantage of the first halt to study, as well as he could in the moonlight, the faces of his captors. Texans and Mexicans were alike, the most brutal-looking wretches he had ever seen. Christobal himself had the appearance of a veritable fiend.

That the South American hated him to a murderous degree, Blanco Bill was confident, and also that he meant to take his life. The collecting of such a band to follow him into New Mexico, and their daring charge through the street of Last Lay-out to capture him, fully proved this. The young man shuddered when he thought of the narrow escape of his darling from the clutches of such a gang. He dared not even think of what her fate would have been.

Had he but known that she was safe he would have been comparatively happy, and would have laughed to scorn his vile captors.

But, as it was, he had much to live for.

Katie Jordan would, he felt assured, be rendered most miserable should he meet death at the hands of these outlaws.

While thus studying upon the position of affairs, the young Texan cast sweeping glances up the sides of the mountain, and along the same, and among the pines and bowlders.

He had not the slightest expectation of discovering a human form, or indeed anything that would give him hope; yet, by some influence his gaze seemed to be drawn up the range.

Great was his surprise, at last, to perceive full a hundred feet up the mountain-side, and directly west from them, the form of an Indian. For an instant only was he visible. He then vanished behind a mass of rock.

Yet, in that hasty glance, Blanco Bill saw that the brave was in full war-paint and feathers, and also carried a rifle in his hand.

The bandits had halted quite near the foot of the range, there being at that particular point no elevations to break the view. Like a flash of light the thought of the Indian who had attempted Katie's capture shot through the mind of the Mustang Monarch, and he decided that there must be a war-party in the vicinity.

If this was really the case, then there was a probability that the bandits would be attacked, and with disastrous results. This, however, gave our young friend no concern.

for he knew that he would not be in a more dangerous position as captive to the Apaches than situated as he now was. Indeed, were the outlaws attacked, there was a possibility of something occurring to favor his escape.

Blanco Bill was positive that no eye except his own had detected the presence of the red brave on the mountain-side; and he now refrained from gazing up the cliff, lest the suspicions of the bandit leader might be awakened. Little time, however, had he to ponder on the situation; for the band again proceeded forward, still following the track of the stampede.

As the outlaws passed the mutilated remains of their comrades, curses both loud and deep burst from their lips, and their glances at their captive were anything but reassuring.

Capitan Christobal, noticing this, at once ordered his men onward at a trot; and up the great gorge all went, in time encamping within a cove-like space on the north side of the vast ravine. Rough and broken was the wall of rock at this place, and towering far above the camp.

Blanco Bill was roughly jerked from the horse, and bound to the stump of a cedar, which had grown alone in the middle of a clear space around which the camp-fires were built; the branches and upper portion of the tree having been at once clipped off by the Mexicans, with their long knives.

Few words were spoken, for all were anxious on account of their dangerous position in the enemies' country; besides being greatly fatigued, and almost famished.

Hardly had the animals been divested of their equipments, when a tremendous tramp announced the arrival in the gorge of the herd of horses that had been stampeded. The outlaws were delighted at having regained their plunder, or at least a large part of it.

Soon the animals swept past the camp, and up the gorge, where they would be safe and secure. Two of the band were dispatched, to act as guard and spies at the entrance, and the main portion of the gang began at once preparing food; Christobal himself being as eager to break his long fast as were any of his followers.

The bandit chief had recognized, when charging upon the "citz" of Last Lay-out, Grande George, as the Texan who had accompanied the Mustang Monarch to the bull-arena at El Paso, and he had been informed by some of his men that he was a noted scout and trapper; but the South American felt sure that no scout could detect "sign" on the trampled trail of the stampede, and since the return of the herd he believed his band to be still more secure from detection. All depended upon the pursuers' knowledge in regard to these animals.

If the "citz" believed that the horses had galloped back to their starting point without being driven thither, then the band would be secure; for, even did the pursuers discover that the herd had passed into and up the gorge, they would not lose time by following the stampede, but would keep on down the range, unless they passed the gorge by daylight.

These reasonings caused the South American, who was far from being a fool, to feel quite safe in his position; and his exultation was doubled in regard to the capture of the young Texan, upon being informed by one of his followers that the captive was none other than the Mustang Monarch, who had created quite an excitement by his knowledge of, and power over the horse-tribe. Christobal was jubilant.

After all had satisfied their appetites, it was in the small hours of the morning, and the bandit chief determined at once to force his prisoner to reveal his secret, for delays were dangerous.

He feared that some of the most desperate and revengeful members of his band would run a knife into the Texan's heart before daylight.

Christobal did not understand English, and he had noticed that his captive seemed ignorant of Spanish. He therefore instructed one of his men to make known to the latter his determination to torture from him the secret, and to interpret to him privately every word the young Texan spoke. He would then slay the interpreter before he

would have time to reveal the secret to others.

Everything being arranged in a manner satisfactory to himself, the South American explained to his men that their prisoner was his professional rival, and that he had besides publicly insulted him. He wished, therefore, to glut his revenge by torturing the young man half to death, after which they could do with him as they wished.

He then gave each of them a sum of gold, and informed them that they might dispose of the herd of horses as they pleased. This unexpected liberality on the part of their chief had the desired effect, and Capitan Christobal made ready at once for the proposed torture of Blanco Bill.

Then "Blink Eye," the Texan outlaw selected as interpreter, and a most ruffianly-looking miscreant, strode up to the captive.

"Say, yeou hoss-man," he began, "yer better squeak out, er pray, fer yer hain't gut long ter linger on this hyer ball o' dirt ef yer don't spit out all yer knows 'bout this hyer hoss-edication' biz. Our boss hyer wants ther secret, an' he's goin' ter tortur' yer on-til yer squeals out ther hull thing. You hear me!"

Meanwhile, Christobal piled fagots around him. Bill now saw why he had not been shot down like a dog. But he felt that it would make no difference in his fate whether he spoke or kept silent. There was no chance for escape.

"Do your coward work!" he said loudly, in contempt and derision. "A man can die but once, and I will die as I have lived, scorning all deceit and cowardice. I have no secret to reveal!"

"I expect no mercy from this band of cut-throats, any more than I would from a war-party of Apaches!"

At the very moment that the voice of the young man ceased, as if the mention of the name of the tribe had conjured them up or been a pre-arranged signal, wild, terrible and blood-curdling, echoing from crag and in gorge and rift, rung the Apache war-cry from many throats!

CHAPTER XXVII.

INTO THE JAWS OF DEATH.

To describe the amazement and terror of the outlaws as the war-whoops of the Apaches broke upon their ears, would be impossible.

For a moment not a man in the coward crew was capable of speech or motion. It seemed as if a thousand yelling fiends had taken possession of the cliffs. Not the slightest suspicion had been entertained by any, except the captive, that an Indian was within a hundred miles of them. Hence their dumfounded astonishment.

As for Blanco Bill, although he could not have explained why, he felt greatly relieved; and was not devoid of hope, although seeing no grounds for it.

The whoops of the savages came from the pines and boulders, and as the moon now lit up the camp of the bandits, the war-party could pour down a galling fire upon them.

Christobal had selected an excellent camp, and one easily defended against the only foes whom he dreaded—namely, those who would pursue him from Last Lay-out—but he now realized, when too late, that he was "corraled," and at the mercy of the skulking red torturers, whose whoops chilled the very marrow in his bones.

His naturally ghastly face became more so. He dropped the fagots that he held in his hand.

The burly Texan renegade, who had demanded of Blanco Bill his secret, gave a tremendous bound across the "open," and there crouched behind a boulder, quivering in its shadow.

The Greasers, as soon as capable of movement, darted to cover, the Texan outlaws not far behind them; and almost immediately the scene was transformed.

The Mustang Monarch stood, bound to the cedar, the only human being in view, and the only one who seemed to have been unmoved by the savage war-whoops.

A silence reigned, that seemed deathlike. Not a thought of their captive now dwelt in the minds of any of the bandits; not even in that of Christobal. All knew that they had little chance, if any, to escape death—that they must fight like demons, or die slowly

ly by the most fearful tortures their savage foes could invent.

Blanco Bill wrenched madly at his bonds, although the act gave him excruciating agony. He felt that a desperate conflict was at hand, and he must escape while it was going on, or not escape at all.

Well he knew that he would be forced to suffer an awful death at the hands of the victors, whether they were his outlaw captors or the Apaches. Consequently, the thongs that bound him were all that was between him and that terrible doom.

Could he but free himself, life and love were possible—yes, even probable.

No wonder, then, that he made herculean efforts to burst his bonds, regardless of the agony every movement gave him.

The silence lasted but a very short time; yet, to the bandits, it seemed to be an age.

Then, here and there, sounded loud and terrified snorts, from the mustangs; and it was soon evident that the beasts were being led away, up the gorge.

Not even a volley of bullets would have caused half the terror and despair as these sounds; for the outlaws now knew, beyond doubt, that their red foes were near them, and that they had lost their only means of flight. Not until this occurred, did the miscreants realize how foolish they had been—that they should, at the first alarm, have ran to, and sprung upon their horses, and then galloped at full speed down the gorge.

Capitan Christobal was not slow in taking in the situation. He recalled the escape of one brave of the party he had attacked on the plains, and from which he had taken the herd of horses; and he felt assured that that one, who had then escaped, had guided his fellow-warriors on the trail, for revenge, and for the recovery of the herd.

The very desperate nature of the position, he now found himself in, caused Christobal to banish the terror that unfitted him for a leader; or, indeed, to defend his own miserable life. No sooner did he perceive that the horses had been taken away by lurking braves, who would doubtless return and commence the work of blood, than he quickly gave a rallying signal, and his men in a few moments crawled to his side among the pines and boulders.

Quickly he explained to them the necessity of forming themselves in positions for defense. The Texan portion of the band had by this time become cool, and clutched their weapons with a desperate grip, determined to sell their lives dearly; but the Greasers were so terrified as to be almost powerless to use knife or revolver with any certainty of effect.

Little time, however, did the Indians give the bandits for deliberation; for, gliding like so many snakes through the dark shades, a half-score of them soon came within a few paces of the objects of their vengeance. Then, from the throat of one of the warriors, came a piercing shriek. Hardly had the echoes of this died away, when, in response to the signal, again rung the horrible war-whoop of the Apaches from the cliffs.

The instant the outlaws gazed up the side of the gorge, through the screen of foliage, spurts of fire shot from the dark seams in the rocks, and a perfect hail of bullets tore through the boughs of the pines; some of them piercing the vitals, and others wounding the crouching outlaws.

While the shrieks of agony and death, broken by the irregular reports of the rifles and revolvers of the bandits, ruled the *motte* and the pines—then, again, in awful intonation, shot out that dread war-whoop; and the half-score of crouching braves sprung, with their long scalping-knives uplifted, directly upon the demoralized outlaws.

The scene was truly horrible!

Desperate, short, and deadly, was the terrific combat; and, at its close, but seven of the bandits—and every one of these wounded—stood panting amid the dead and dying. Then ten Apaches lay, gory, and silent forever. Their last war-cry had sounded.

Yet no exultation was manifested by the survivors. They stood, silent and listening: their gaze turned toward the cliff.

All knew that those they had slain of their foes had been but a small and detached party.

Capitan Christobal had a terrible gash across his white cheek, and his black and

piercing eyes were glassy and unnatural with a tiger-like thirst for revenge.

The blood of the South American was up.

Soon the sounds told of warriors descending the cliff-side. Christobal thrust his rifle through the screen of foliage, and hissed out the order to fire. After their recent success, the band had hopes of a final victory.

Full a dozen bronzed braves were now making their hazardous way down the almost perpendicular wall of the gorge at different points. At the base of this wall grew a narrow fringe of pines, which hid the cliff for some twenty feet.

Blanco Bill, still fast bound to the decapitated tree, was between the wall of the gorge and the pines that concealed the bandits; but the latter heeded him not, their eyes being fixed far above him, upon the red foe.

At a shrill whistle from their captain, every one of the outlaws pulled trigger.

A tremendous report followed the blinding flash, and then a fearful sight!

Painted and feathered braves fell down the jagged rocks, and crashing into the pines, as their death-hoofs shot through the gorge!

Then from the fringe of pines into which the dead were falling, came the terrible Apache war-whoops again, and this time from many throats. Not until then, did the bandits realize that they were in the very jaws of death.

Like lightning it flashed through the minds of all, that a large number of the Indians had descended the cliff during the progress of the fight, and were now awaiting the descent of their comrades, when all would bound forth, across the camp, to the scene of the conflict, and annihilate the survivors; for they could not but know that the first party had been defeated, and slain.

This last war-whoop and dash of the Apaches was more than the wounded and fatigued outlaws could bear, and stand their ground.

They had no hope of maintaining their position against that phalanx of bronzed braves now maddened to frenzy by the death of their comrades.

Besides this, the bandits had not had time to reload their weapons.

One thought now occupied their minds and that was flight.

Christobal, however, knew he could not hope to escape in that manner; and he also knew that, if his men kept together, they would be all doomed. To keep together, at the beginning of the attack, had been their only alternative; now, it would be their destruction—the death of the remnant of the band, to the last man!

With this thought the bandit leader sprang up among the thick branches of a tree, while his men rushed through the pines toward the clear bed of the gorge. The next moment the Apaches were in hot chase. Soon they dashed from among the pines, and were welcomed by the Texan outlaws with a fusillade from their revolvers, which laid several of the braves low. The Greasers, at sight of this, also endeavored to make a stand.

It was but for an instant. Then the remnant of the bandit gang became the center of a circling horde of savages, and the butchering began.

So eager had been the Indians, so madly frantic for blood and revenge, that they heard not the galloping of a horse up the gorge, a magnificent black steed, which upon catching sight of the outlaws, swerved from its course and into the pines—thus guided by the Fates—and made halt directly in front of Blanco Bill.

The animal had recognized the signal of the Mustang Monarch.

It was his own Black Hawk, and fully equipped, the same as when the young Texan had been dragged from his saddle by the infuriated mob at Last Lay-out.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE WINGS OF THE WIND.

No human being in the position of the Mustang Monarch, bound and helpless, could have heard the dread sounds and witnessed the terrible sights which he was obliged to hear and see, without being horrified.

His back was turned toward the cliff, but when he heard the noises made by the Apaches climbing down, he was forced by

some horrid fascination to turn his head and gaze behind him. The dread spectacle he beheld was not calculated to impress him favorably; indeed, he believed that his time had come.

Still, as the Indians were so murderously vengeful toward the bandits, Blanco Bill hoped that when they saw he was a captive and securely bound, they would not molest him until after they had slain all the outlaws. This he believed the red-men would do, although he was confident that thus far the followers of Christobal had been the victors.

By the fearful sounds that had come from the pines, the young man had known that a terrible fight had occurred—that a number of Indians had attacked the outlaws, the savages having advanced from up the gorge.

He kept his senses strained to catch the slightest sound, in order to know everything that transpired, for his very life might depend upon the knowledge thus gained.

The consequence was that Blanco Bill was aware that the Apaches had taken away the mustangs of the bandits.

When the braves had fired their guns from the cliff, the terrific discharge had greatly startled our young friend; for he knew that at least one of the warriors had taken aim at himself. The bullet had struck the stump of the tree to which he was bound.

Ere long he uttered a fervent thanksgiving, for he felt another bullet strike near his wrists; and the rope, by which he was bound, twitched at the same instant. This convinced him that it had partly cut away the bonds that held him.

Yet he dared not strive to break free, fearing that the Indians would observe him, rush upon him, and slay him.

He knew that the Apaches, as they reached the pines, remained there secreted, awaiting the arrival of their slower comrades.

He felt sure that the friendly bullet had not been intended; that the gun had been aimed downward, and to kill him; or it might, perhaps, have been a random, hasty shot.

Soon he perceived the weapons of the bandits projecting from the pines; and then came the spurts of fire, and the loud and deafening explosion.

A moment after, came the rush of the vengeful red-men toward him, on their way to the pines; and he now expected to be pierced, bound and helpless as he was, to the vitals by the knives of the savages.

Blanco Bill closed his eyes.

Let the worst come, if come it must.

But, the next instant, he realized that the Indians had rushed past him, with their horrible whoops of war, and he opened his eyes just in time to see the entire party dash into the pines.

Words are inadequate to express the relief that he felt.

It seemed to him that he had, literally, been snatched from the grasp of death.

Yet, he was still bound; and, if he could not wrench himself free, he would be slain or tortured within the hour. And he still feared to make the attempt to break his bonds.

Were he to do so, and fail, he must assuredly meet the fate he so dreaded.

Then it flashed upon his mind, that Katie Jordan, if indeed, she still lived, must be in anguish in regard to his fate; besides, being left alone in Last Lay-out, with no protector or friend—for the young man believed that Teddy McCarthy had been stricken with death, when he had last seen him, clutching at the slabs of the shanty.

The thoughts of Katie served to make the young Texan straighten up, and he gathered all his strength in an effort to free himself; but, at that moment, he heard the crashing of a horse in the bushes, between the pines and the cliff to the east; and, to his intense joy, he discovered his own noble steed, Black Hawk.

Giving a signal, the animal at once galloped, with every evidence of pleasure, up to his master.

And, just at that moment, Blanco Bill beheld a white face, upon which was a bloody gash, up amid the pines, partly concealed by the branches in front of him.

Instantly he recognized Senor Ronaldino Christobal, his would-be assassin, and the author of all his sufferings!

The face of the South American was stamped with terror, however, and he did not appear to have any evil intentions toward his hated foe and rival, whom he had trailed so far to slay. His own safety appeared to be uppermost in his mind; for the exultant whoops of the Apaches filled the air, and by the yells and shrieks of the outlaws who were being butchered, he must have known that if he escaped at all it must be at once.

The Mustang Monarch had now hopes, on account of Black Hawk's appearance.

It seemed a promise of success, of life and love.

With a tremendous effort, he spent all his strength, and cast himself forward.

The bonds broke, and he fell to the earth!

In a moment he was upon his feet, but his arms were benumbed!

He rubbed his lacerated wrists, and then, knowing that the Indians might, at any moment, rush from the pines, sprung himself into the same; and, securing a brace of revolvers from the dead outlaw, he quickly loaded the weapons, and then bounded upon his horse, urging Black Hawk through the pines into the open bed of the gorge.

Just below his position, and between himself and safety, or the way to the entrance of the huge rent in the range, were the Apache warriors. These were now engaged in mutilating and scalping the slain bandits.

Through the red-men he must dash or his escape could not be effected.

He knew that he had every favorable advantage that was possible, positioned as he was.

The Indians were not aware of his presence at that point; and, as it appeared, they had not heard in their excitement, the gallop of Black Hawk up the gorge, and through the pines. They believed him to be still securely bound to the stump of the cedar.

Upon beholding him upon his black steed, with a leveled and presented revolver in each hand, dashing upon them, they would naturally be dumfounded; from the fact that they were positive no enemy was up the gorge.

Reasoning thus, Blanco Bill at once drove spurs, and Black Hawk shot forward, at tremendous bounds, directly toward the Apaches, and, as the latter whirled in alarm, from their savage work, two quick flashes lurst from the muzzles of his revolvers, and again and again the leaden messengers of death tore through the vitals of many an Apache brave.

Out, through and beyond the red horde, shot the Mustang Monarch, Black Hawk trampling to the earth those who stood in his way; while the most fearful death-yells filled the air, mingled with rallying cries and whoops of war.

Before the Apaches had recovered from their amazement and overwhelming fury sufficiently to load their rifles, Blanco Bill, upon his black steed, dashed around a bend of the gorge, and was free as the prairie air!

But, not far had he proceeded, when, speeding toward him, dashed an Apache warrior upon a mustang—evidently one of those who had been ordered to the mouth of the gorge, to assassinate the outlaw sentinels, and report any danger.

So truly imposing, dauntless, and desperate, appeared the young Texan upon his magnificent horse—which the brave had doubtless observed galloping up the gorge—that the latter, in evident fright, as Blanco Bill leveled his revolvers, lashing his mustang to one side, and into the dark shades of the pines.

Having witnessed a surfeit of horrible butchery, and feeling devoutly thankful, for his own almost miraculous deliverance, our young friend continued his course; swerving not to either side, and not caring to shoot the fleeing Apache.

Had not Black Hawk appeared at the most critical time, and when most needed, the brave Texan felt that escape would have been impossible.

He owed his life once more to his noble, handsome, and faithful steed; a fact which would increase his love for everything in the shape of a horse, and strengthen his resolve to devote his life to the equine species, as second only in his regard to Katie Jordan.

But, did Katie yet live?

As this thought again came into his mind, he cried out:

"On, Black Hawk! On, to Katie!"

It had been most providential, the coming of his horse, most strange and unaccountable—indeed, most wonderful.

Thus thought Blanco Bill, the Mustang Monarch.

But it was soon to be explained.

When he uttered that cry to his horse, it meant, in his way of thinking, a long and anxious ride to Last Lay-out; but the young man was destined to be very agreeably disappointed for, upon dashing through the pine belt, he beheld a most welcome sight.

This was neither more nor less than the "citz," led by Grande George and Alamo Abe; and, with them, to his great joy and amazement, Katie Jordan, and Teddy McCarthy riding beside the scout.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE EQUINE EDUCATOR'S EXIT.

THE Mustang Monarch upon Black Hawk presented an impressive appearance, as he shot from the pines into plain view of the "citz," and our friends who were in advance.

His sombrero had been lost when he had been dragged from his horse in Last Lay-out, his clothing was torn, and blood had flowed from the wound he had received on his head. His long, light and curling hair flew wild in the wind of his speed, and he sat proudly poised, with revolvers gripped, on the alert for foes.

With a cry of glad joy and intense relief, Katie Jordan urged Calico onward; Teddy McCarthy crying out, as he also drove spurs:

"Thunder an' turf! If there ain't Mister Blanco Bill, may I never see Ould Ireland again! Begorra, there's wan dacint gintleman left in this divil of a country, but it's little there's left o' meself. For all that, be cripes, I wasn't afther expectin' there'd be a whole bone in me body."

"But it's right I was in wan thing—the divil doubt me if I wasn't—it's Miss Katie herself that thinks a dale o' Blanco Bill."

Grande George gave a loud yell, as did also Alamo Abe, and the latter was about to dash spurs and hasten on to meet the young Texan, and apologize to him for the reception he had met with in Last Lay-out, when the scout intercepted him, crying out:

"Hold on, Abel! Reckon we-uns better keep on sorter slow-like, fer mebbe so ther Mustang Monarch 'u'd like ter sling a leetle soft lingo et ther calico. Hit sorter 'pears es though ther two war 'tendin' ter pard ter-gether fer ther rest o' thar nat'ral tarm o' existence."

"Dang me, ef hit warn't a good thing thet ther black nag tuck a notion ter stomped on ther trail on his own 'count! An' I'm glad we-uns didn't rope ther critter. Thet hoss air wo'th a hull pocket o' 'yaller-boyces."

"Ye're mighty right, all 'roun'," agreed the sheriff; "ther nag hed a leetle rest an' feed arter ther Monarch gut jarked off'n ther critter, an' arter we-uns all left ther burg. I reckon ther hoss gut lonesome like, an' hit war lucky fer yer pard, hit 'pears."

"Wonder what sort of a rumpus hev bin goin' on? He skinned through anyways though, an' things hev panned out hunk."

The "citz" gave whoops of welcome, but all became silent as Blanco Bill gave a warning gesture, pointing toward the gorge.

Katie Jordan soon reached the side of her lover, and their hands met in a warm clasp; their eyes speaking more plainly and with deeper meaning than words could have expressed. But each was distressed at the worn and haggard appearance of the other.

Privation from sleep, continual exertion, terrible excitement, and intense agony of heart, had told upon both; but the blood-stained face of the young man caused him to appear almost frightful.

"Katie, my darling! Thank God, I meet you once more!"

This was all Blanco Bill could utter.

"Oh, Will! I never expected to see you alive again!"

As Katie said this, Teddy galloped up, crying out:

"Be the piper that played before Moses, Mister Blanco Bill, it's ould Teddy McCarthy's heart that's swelled wid joy, to see yees alive one't more! Be cripes, I was

afther thinkin' the haythens had yees fer good!"

"Thank you, Teddy," returned the young Texan; "it seems we all have had a rather rough experience of it since we first met, but I hope the worst is now over. Had not Black Hawk come just in the nick of time, I should have been a captive to the Apaches, without doubt."

"That horse of mine is worth his weight in diamonds. He has saved my life, upon more than one occasion."

"Katie, I must insist upon your remaining here with Teddy for a short time, as those fiendish Apaches are in the gorge, and at their brutal work, mutilating the dead. Senor Christobal's men are all slain, and he himself will be a prisoner, I think, by the time we can reach the scene of the recent fight."

"Oh, Will, do not return! It is not necessary, for there are enough men here to drive away all that war-party."

At this moment, the "citz," with the scout and the sheriff, rode up, and the pair were at once surrounded by them.

The Mustang Monarch soon explained the situation of affairs up the gorge; all being rejoiced at the destruction of the outlaw band, and from knowing that the much-dreaded Apaches were now in their power.

Blanco Bill succeeded in prevailing upon Katie to remain with Teddy in the pines, at the entrance of the gorge; and then all dashed headlong up the same, toward the heart of the range, and the scene of the late conflict, Bill and Abe being in the lead.

The former had little hope of finding the Apaches, however, as he believed that the Indian he had met when speeding down the gorge, had discovered the "citz," as they came down the range, and was galloping to warn the war-party.

No doubt this was the case, for not an Indian was to be seen in the gorge ahead, as our friends arrived within sight of the battleground, the scene of the massacre of the outlaw band.

Recalling the fact that he had seen the horribly disfigured face of Christobal within the pine branches, Blanco Bill galloped straight to the camp, all following; the "citz" infuriated at the escape of the Apache fiends.

Ejaculations of horror burst from the lips of all, as they broke from the pines; for, lashed to the same tree-stub, to which the young Texan had been bound for the torture, was the fearfully-mutilated body of the South American!

Capitan Christobal had been scalped, his ears cut off, the clothing torn from his body, and his whole frame lacerated.

It was a terrible sight!

The Mustang Monarch could not refrain from uttering an expression of pity; for, although Christobal had caused him so much misery and suffering, and would have tortured him, had not the Apaches appeared upon the scene when they did—for all this, the young man felt that the fate which had overtaken the South American was too terrible a one, even for the worst of criminals.

The reeking, mutilated corpse before them was all that remained of Senor Ronaldino Christobal or Capitan Christobal the bandit, the self-styled Champion Horse Educator of South America!

Yells, the most terrific, shot from all; for the sight of the mutilated dead, especially the Texans, although outlaws, had rendered the "citz" frantic for revenge. Blanco Bill was also eager to wipe out from the face of the earth a brace or two more of the inhuman paint-daubed demons of the Pecos.

At that moment he recalled the fact that there was no outlet to the gorge; and, urging Black Hawk toward and through the pines, he yelled for all to follow, while he galloped at once up the huge break in the range.

And, madly the citizens dashed on after him, weapons in hand.

Soon, upon turning a bend of the gorge, the young Texan gave a loud whoop, and the party spurred frantically forward.

The next instant, the report of rifles rung and echoed in the gorge, as well as in every cleft, and rift, and cavern, up the peaks; death-yells, most horrible to hear, followed after, as red braves, who were clambering up the cliff-side, were pierced by leaden balls.

The wounded Apaches swung from jutting rock and shelf for a few moments, with the grip of death, and then shot downward, to be dashed into shapeless masses below!

Full half the survivors of the fight between the bandits and the Apaches were slain; the remainder succeeding in gaining the top of the gorge wall, and then rushing to another gulch that led out to the plain westward, where they had left their mustangs. Thus they escaped.

All the horses of the outlaw band fully equipped, were captured by the "citz;" the herd, which had been the means of saving the life of the Mustang Monarch, was secured also. Besides these, the arms of the slain bandits and Indians were collected; thus making up quite a valuable amount of booty.

As may be supposed, Blanco Bill lost no time in rejoining Katie and Teddy, after the last living Indian had disappeared beyond the upper wall of the gorge; and the trio proceeded slowly, on their return to Last Lay-out, the scout, sheriff, and "citz" bringing up the rear, and driving the captured horses. These last were, however, left to feed, being guarded by a number of men, as soon as a favorable place was reached; for the animals were greatly fatigued, from the fight and the stampede.

Upon arriving at Last Lay-out, one of the best furnished shanties was allotted to Katie Jordan; and the poor maiden, utterly broken in spirits and energy through all that she had undergone, felt the utmost relief, when enabled to cast her weary form upon a couch.

Teddy McCarthy, as he threw himself across the entrance, outside the door of the cabin in which reposed his young mistress, exclaimed with extreme satisfaction and the deepest sincerity, at the same time closing his eyes:

"Thanks be till goodness! Sure I'm at rist at last, be cripes; an' be the hole in me coat, I'll sleep for a week, I'm thinkin'!"

Blanco Bill was little less anxious for sleep and rest. Indeed, this was the condition of all the "citz" of Last Lay-out.

Eventually all became silent in the burg, over which was cast the dark shadows of the towering peaks; for, by this time, it was the small hours of the night—"the divil's own night," as Teddy put it.

Texas, the little burro, after browsing about for awhile between the shanties, at times jerking up his head, and casting a lazy look toward the range, and up and down the street, as if he was not positive in his mind that the strange "circusing" was at an end, finally sought the cabin in which reposed his fair young mistress, and there lay down by the side of the faithful old Irishman; soon, like poor Katie's human protector, indulging in a *siesta*.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE WANDERER'S RETURN.

NOT a few of the "citz" of Last Lay-out, who had been with the party led by Alamo Abe and Grande George up the gulch, were well aware of the vengeful character of the Apaches; but even these had not the slightest idea, that the survivors of the conflict would seek to avenge their dead.

Yet, had any one of the whites remained behind, to secretly watch the movements of the Indian—a precaution which should have been taken—much misery might have been avoided.

As has been said, Last Lay-out lay, calm and peaceful, under the shadows of the rocky range.

Thus we leave it, while we ask the reader to revisit with us a lately deserted scene.

The terror and excitement of the fleeing Apaches partially vanished, as they became confident of safety. Furious with pent-up hate and rage, they witnessed the plundering of the dead bandits, the driving down the gulch of all the horses upon which were the equipments, and the departure of their successful foes.

Red Deer, the chief of the Apaches, immediately ordered one of his most trusted and skilled spies and trailers to hasten at once in the rear of the whites; and, upon the latter reaching their town or camp, to return and report—ascertaining the strength of the foe, and the advantages that might be taken in an attack.

After the departure of White Horse, Red Deer ordered his warriors to follow him, and, then, passing along the gulch wall eastward, to a point easier of descent, all made their way down to the bed of the vast ravine.

There, having buried their fallen fellow-braves in a cavern, the entrance to which they walled up with stones, they, at a signal yell from their chief, bounded across, and then up the side of the gulch, at the same place at which they had descended. When they gained the top, the chief halted not, but sped along the side of the range south, his warriors following in single file.

Suddenly Red Deer disappeared, as if sinking into the rocks, as did one after another of those who followed him; all proceeding at dangerous haste down a branching crevasse into a smaller gulch than the one that had proved so disastrous to them and to the outlaws.

The bed of this gulch was thickly interspersed with dwarf pines and cedars, that grew in clumps; and between these could be seen many wild-eyed mustangs, that now sprung back and forth, snorting with fright.

This was caused by the vengeful war-whoop of Red Deer, as he reached a point half-way down the seam in the rock wall.

As if by magic, half a score of war-painted savages sprung from the dark shades of many a thicket into view.

These knew that their brother braves had suffered defeat, and that their chief, Red Deer, was madly eager for revenge—that another desperate fight was to follow, and that they were to participate in it.

No sooner was this comprehended by them than a simultaneous howl shot from the throats of the Apache guard, followed by a murderous whoop, that betrayed a tigerish longing for blood.

A second signal, as Red Deer neared the junction of the steep seam with the gulch, caused the guards to bound forward and equip the mustangs, the animals snorting, and rearing upon their hind legs.

In less time than one would think possible, Red Deer, at the head of over a score of warriors, rode at terrific speed down the gulch. Soon they reached its mouth, when they turned up the range, keeping well in the shade of the towering peaks, and also proceeding near the base of the mountains, the scattered boulders and bushes screening them from the view of any who might be on the open plain.

Then a low hiss came from the lips of the chief, who rode in advance, he at the same time checking his mustang gradually.

This signal soon passed along the whole length of the line, and all speedily halted, sitting their steeds, while every eye was directed to a point in their rear, which their keen-eyed leader indicated by extending his arm and fore-finger.

For some distance in that direction there were no trees to break the view.

The Indians could gaze over the rocks and clumps of bushes without fear of discovery.

They could with difficulty repress a yell, and many of them instinctively whirled their mustangs half about, and clutched their weapons.

What could those bloodthirsty Apaches have seen to thus affect them, especially when speeding on the trail for revenge?

Certainly it must have been a sight that promised to lessen in a measure their thirst for blood.

And such indeed it was.

It was a little party of half a dozen white men, galloping over the plain. Almost immediately these passed up the range, but still in the rear of the war-party; the trees now shutting them out from the view of the red-men.

It was evident to Red Deer and his braves that these whites must have been some distance below when they rejoined their comrades. But it appeared strange to see such a party riding at that time of the night, for the Indians were confident that they did not belong to those who had slain so many of their number at the big gulch.

They decided now that this little band must not be allowed to join the others and strengthen them.

Then, by vigorous gestures and signs, the chief directed his braves as to their movements and his plans.

Guiding their animals slowly, and with

great care avoiding the hard or stony ground, as well as every contact with bush or branch, causing no sounds that could possibly be heard by their intended victims—thus the red demons stole toward the outer line of boulders and thickets, soon reaching favorable positions. There they stationed themselves in a line, ready to bound forth and overwhelm the little party of unsuspecting whites, who rapidly approached the ambush, evidently on their way to Last Lay-out.

Any mountain man would at once have recognized these night-riders as miners, who had evidently been on a prospecting tour; for they wore woolen shirts and crumpled sombreros, and had a pack-mule in lead, carrying their cooking-utensils, picks, spades and shovels.

But a little time elapsed when these men neared the deadly ambush.

The Indians glared out from their coverts, with apparent satisfaction, for they were confident of their victims without loss to themselves, having discovered how fatigued and utterly unsuspecting of danger they were.

In a minute more came the signals from Red Deer, followed by the terrible Apache war-whoop.

The scene that followed beggars description.

Before the miners had fairly recovered from their amazement and horror, they were surrounded by the yelling horde of paint-bedaubed fiends, and cries of hopeless despair and agony came from the doomed men's lips, as the steel-pointed shafts of their red foes tore their way through clothing and flesh at short range before they could draw weapons in their defense!

The unfortunate miners were the center of a whirlpool of savage war.

Knives flashed before their eyes, and they were dragged from their horses by their arms, or the hair of their heads. Not a horse ridden by them had escaped free from the torturing arrows, and frantic with fright and pain, these poor beasts had reared and plunged amid the fiendish conflict.

It was a horrible scene, there upon that moonlight plain, but it lasted only for a brief space; and, as the victorious whoop rung from the Apaches, and they collected around their chief, the miners, one only excepted, lay scalped, hacked, and mutilated, upon the plain.

This exception was a young man of fine appearance, a picture of health and manly beauty. He was strong of build, and perfect in form; and not a trace of fear did he betray, although bound, and surrounded by his captors.

Why had he been spared?"

We will explain.

As the war-cry first broke upon this young man's ears, he had jerked his revolvers, and driving spurs home, had bounded forward yelling for his comrades to follow; but he had been too late, his escape being cut off.

Realizing this, he had at once turned his horse, and met the charge of the Apaches; blazing away with his deadly revolvers, the reports that followed heralding each a death amid the ranks of the red foe. But, he was overwhelmed by the avalanche, and torn from his saddle by the infuriated savages, who had seen three of their number fall, with the death-yell bursting from their soon-to-be silent lips, before the steady aim of the dauntless young miner.

Instant death must have been his portion, had not a signal cry from Red Deer prevented it.

The Apache chief had witnessed the daring and cool bravery of this young man, in the face of death, and had been impressed with admiration, to the extent of resolving that the dauntless fellow should die the death of a warrior, at the torture stake.

Calm and dauntless though the young miner was, he ground his teeth, and his eyes filled, as he looked upon his butchered comrades.

Had Katie Jordan witnessed that scene, an agony of soul would have been hers that would have banished life; for the captive of the demon Apaches was none other than Patrick Jordan, the wandering brother, whom Katie had braved dangers, privations, and even death, to find!

But Katie now lay wrapped in profound slumber—the slumber of fatigue—in Last Lay-out; while the Fates, in a most mysteri-

ous manner, had guided Patsey toward her, and nearly to his death.

Would the Fates prove good or evil in the time to come?

Had Patsey Jordan been saved from instant death, that he might be re-united to his sister? Or, was a lingering death by torture, and that near at hand, reserved for him, at the hands of his demon captors?

We shall see.

CHAPTER XXXI.

TEXAS GIVES THE SIGNAL.

WHEN last Patsey Jordan had written to his sister, he had stated that he was without a dollar to his name; that he had wandered from one "find" to another, staking claims that had proved to be almost worthless, and was resolved at last to strike for New Mexico.

The poor girl's anxiety had been such, in the many months that had elapsed since then, that she could remain at home no longer, and made up her mind to seek her brother at all hazards. Hence the strange and tedious journey of the faithful and loving sister.

Probably there was not a happier man in the United States than Patsey Jordan, during the week previous to his capture by the Apaches. And his companions had been no less happy than he, for all had discovered, while wandering down the range, what they considered a rich bonanza.

This discovery was in the bed of a wild gorge, the entrance to which was almost hidden from view by stunted trees and cacti. The bed of this, they at once saw, was a raging torrent during heavy rains, and as the sides of the huge rent gave evidences of the precious metal that rules the world, they believed the bed would prove rich in nuggets and scales of gold.

Investigation and careful search had proved their surmises to have been correct, and but a few days after the arrival of Patsey and his pals, they all found themselves really rich.

We can but faintly imagine their joy.

They were now at last in a condition to return to civilized haunts and loved ones.

But well they knew the dangers that surrounded them.

Their gold was liable to be taken from them, and their lives as well, by mountain robbers, who were ever on the alert. And no less danger must they encounter through the predatory bands of Indians.

Their only safety lay in gaining some mining-town at once, and they decided to travel by night and make for Last Lay-out, of which they had recently heard.

The fate of the unfortunate party, which has been the fate of many under just the same circumstances, has been already told. So it was that young Jordan was hurried, amid the hellish horde of Apaches, toward Last Lay-out.

So eager were the Indians for their revenge that they lingered not to capture the affrighted horses of their victims, but allowed the animals to gallop out upon the plain, intending upon their return to secure the plunder they most desired. The arms and ammunition of the slain, more precious to the reds than the weight of the same in gold, were secured with great satisfaction.

Then on up the range, keeping within the shadows of the towering peaks, sped Red Deer and his braves, leaving the bodies of three of their number, slain by Patsey Jordan, at the entrance to the big gulch, intending to give them the customary rites of sepulture upon their return from their raid for vengeance.

Amid that demon horde, with pale set face and eyes staring straight ahead, rode the fast bound captive, knowing well that his captors were proceeding direct to Last Lay-out, which gave him some hope that a rescue awaited him when he reached it.

It appeared strange to the youth, that the Apaches, being weak in numbers, should venture up the range. He began to think that they must be ignorant of the fact that a town was located so near. But he was soon made aware that, not only did they know that they were approaching Last Lay-out, but they intended to surprise and murder the citizens.

Soon, at a signal from Red Deer, the war-party came to a sudden stop.

Patsey Jordan was now near the point where the chief and his spy met and halted; and the young miner gazed at the pair, with an intensity that told of the life and death importance of their every gesture and motion.

Frequent gestures up the range, with guttural explanations, were made by the spy; which left no doubt, especially after the war-party continued onward, that the Indians intended to steal into the town.

Patsey determined, if in his power, to give a yell of alarm, even should his life pay the forfeit.

It would be horrible thus to sit in his saddle, and know that the red demons were crawling upon sleeping men, to bury knives in their hearts!

He knew that he could not bear this.

He would be compelled to give vent to his horror.

But he soon saw that it would be impossible for him to warn the intended victims of the Apaches; for, upon reaching a point something like a mile from Last Lay-out, a wad of buckskin was crammed into his mouth, thus preventing any outcry. They then moved slowly forward, taking precautions, as they neared the town, to make no noise that would give warning of their approach.

Patsey Jordan was in an agony.

Red Deer soon halted, and his braves gathered around him for orders.

The chief gave his directions, and all dismounted; the mustangs being taken in charge by five of the Indians, a duty which kept them on the alert, for the animals were in a very excited state.

The horse, upon which young Jordan was bound, was led into a long line of pine trees, and secured by the neck-ropes to a limb, by a brave who was eager to participate in the bloody harvest.

Satisfied that the captive was secure, this warrior hastened to rejoin his comrades; and, upon hands and knees, the red pirates of the plains proceeded on their mission of murder.

No sooner had the Apache left the side of Patsey Jordan, than the horse of the young miner stepped toward the border of the pines, as far as the rope would admit; and Patsey found that he could gaze directly into the town. As his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, he readily made out the forms of a number of men, outstretched upon the earth in front of the cabins, for the night was close and sultry.

Nearest to him, Patsey saw not only the form of a man, before the door of a shanty, but a donkey as well; the head of the animal resting upon the man's body.

This singular scene chained the captive's attention, but he little dreamed that the sleeper was his old friend, Teddy McCarthy; much less did he imagine that his sister reposed within the cabin.

As it was, his mental torture was terrible.

In vain he strove to free himself.

But that dread suspense was destined to be broken, in a manner entirely unsuspected by either captive or captors.

The horse of the young miner had been ridden long and hard. The animal was covered with foam and panting laboriously.

Being nearly frantic from thirst as well, it was natural for the poor beast to bear hard on the rope; and, as it got the scent of water in the town, to paw hard upon the earth.

This caused the burro to raise its head, and gaze about; evidently somewhat anxiously anticipating another series of circus-like events. The next instant, it would have appeared to one who was acquainted with the experiences of the donkey during the day and night previous to his lying down for repose, that everything through which he had passed must have been suddenly brought to mind; for "Texas" probably never moved more rapidly before. He bounded to his feet in an instant.

Teddy turned over, gave an audible moan, and again sunk into slumber.

For a moment, the burro stood, as if listening; then, as it got scent of the strange horse, it sent out a most terrific and prolonged squeal, that was most unearthly and startling. This broke the awful silence, and caused Patsey Jordan to take fresh courage.

That most piercing squeal seemed to awaken ten thousand echoes amid the rough

and broken sides of the rocky range; as if so many fiends were shrieking to their fellows the Apaches, to hasten on their hellish work.

But that strange note was destined to save many from death, in that slumbering village, and to seal the doom of not a few of the savages. It was almost sufficient to awake the dead. Indeed, had an earthquake riven the adamant range at that instant, the sleeping denizens of Last Lay-out would not have sprung to their feet more quickly—Teddy McCarthy among the rest.

"Holy Mary stan' betune us an' all harum," exclaimed the old Irishman. "Bad 'cess till the whole seed, breed, an' generation o' New Mexico! But this is the devil's own night entirely! Be gobs, thin, it seems that Miss Katie's in danger again; but it's ould Teddy that'll stan' betune her an' the murtherin' haythen!"

It is doubtful whether McCarthy really understood the character of the terrific sound that had aroused, and so greatly startled him; for "Texas" had "shut off steam" before the old man had recovered from his dazed condition.

Just then, the terrible war-whoops of the Apaches burst upon the night, and the citizens were brought to a realization of the nature of the peril that threatened them.

There had been sufficient interval of comparative silence between the squeal of "Texas" and the fearful din that followed for Patsey Jordan to hear the greater portion of the rapidly-uttered words of Teddy McCarthy, and the helpless captive was as much astonished probably as it is possible for any human being to be. For he not only recognized the voice of the Irishman, but heard him mention his name.

Of one thing the young man felt certain.

His sister was within that cabin!

Patsey beheld Teddy bound into the shanty and shut the door.

It all seemed to him incredible.

Was he dreaming or had he gone insane?

Could mortal man be placed in a more torturing position, even without taking into consideration his own condition and but too probable fate?

The young miner's muscles gathered in great knots, his strong form quivered like an aspen leaf, his eyes started from their sockets and his breath came and went like that of a man enduring partial strangulation, while he writhed and made herculean efforts to free himself from the torturing cords that bound him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE RAID OF THE RED-MEN.

GRANDE GEORGE, Blanco Bill, and Alamo Abe had spread their blankets near each other on the sward between Benzine Bazaar and the next shanty, and all three sprung to their feet the instant that the squeal of "Texas" broke upon their ears.

As a matter of course, they, from being thus awakened so abruptly from so deep a slumber, were for a moment unable to comprehend the nature of the alarm; or, indeed, for that matter, to know clearly whether they were living or dead—whether in this world or in the land of mystery.

This state of mind, however, lasted but a short time. The crackling and flashing flames that shot upward from a shanty which was dry as tinder, revealed but too plainly the true condition of affairs, and the danger that threatened the town.

The first reasonable thought of Blanco Bill after beholding the swarming Apaches, and hearing their whoops of war, was of Katie Jordan, and he shot a glance toward the cabin occupied by her, just as the faithful Teddy darted within the same, gun in hand, evidently with the intention of barricading himself and his young mistress inside, where he could easily defend her.

What he thus saw greatly relieved the Mustang Monarch, he believing Katie to be safe, for a time at least, which gave him a chance to assist in the defense of the town.

The "citz," as soon as they recovered from their amazement, at once understood the nature of the attack, and knew that the survivors of the war-party had hastened up the range, maddened even to reckless disregard of their own lives. Desperate and furious indeed must the Apaches be to thus attack the town; but all could see that, had it not

been for the strange signal given by the burro, the red fiends must have been successful.

The revolvers of the "citz" were soon belching fire and lead, and amid the awful din death-yells could be heard.

Only a very few Indians were visible, these having broken from cover from the east side of the street.

But the whites were fated soon to know, and to their cost, that the Apaches were not such fools as they had supposed them to be; and besides, that there was a much larger number of them than they had thought.

Hardly had a dozen shots been fired by our friends when, with terrific whoops of war, there sprung from the rear of the west line of the shanties, and between the same, to the streets a dozen warriors, who dashed upon the line of whites from their rear. Several of the miners fell victims, the Indians sheathing their scalping-knives in the backs of their hated victims, and tearing the reeking scalps from their heads!

Yells and shrieks of agony almost drowned the whoops of war, and the three brave men, who stood side by side, were forced to whirl and defend themselves from the furious onslaught of foes of whose presence they had not dreamed but a moment before.

A furious volley from the revolvers of the miners followed the discovery of the assault from the rear; but the Apaches, bearing in mind the terrible effect of the weapons of the whites during their retreat up the wall of the gulch, darted back to cover.

This had been the tactics of the Indians who had made the assault from the east side of the street, and consequently, notwithstanding the superiority in arms, and skill in the use of them, there had been no larger number of savages slain than citizens.

Immediately after the rapid seeking of cover by both parties of Apaches, they opened fire with the rifles and revolvers they had secured from their victims on the open plain, and the few fire-arms they had been able to retain in their hasty climb up the wall of the gulch.

Their aim, however, was far from being accurate; although some of the miners were wounded by the fast-flying lead, which forced all to retreat for safety into Benzine Bazaar and other shanties.

Blanco Bill was tortured in mind almost beyond endurance, for he feared that the Indians would capture Katie and Teddy, or else set fire to the shanty, their refuge, and burn them alive.

The "citz" of Last Lay-out had means of knowing the number of their red foes, and as they were well aware that there were many more than had scaled the gulch wall in safety, it was natural for them to believe that they were much stronger in numbers than they really were. Consequently, they hesitated in charging upon concealed enemies, who might slay many of their number before they could even cross the street, and perfectly overwhelm them; besides, they would be between two fires, as the Apaches who had retreated to the dark shades in the rear of Benzine Bazaar, toward the range, were doubtless ready to take any advantage favorable to them.

"Dog-gone my Texas heart!" exclaimed Alamo Abe, as, panting from exertion and excitement, he, with Blanco Bill, Grande George, and half a dozen more, rushed into Benzine Bazaar.

"This air ther wo'stest fix I ever experienced! Who'd 'a' thought ther pesky red heathun 'u'd turned up ag'in, rampagin' mad fer bleed an' ha'r, arter ther drutbin' we-uns gi'n 'em down range? Hit 'pears thar war a hefty lot more o' ther condemned coyotes, hidin' mong ther rocks. What's ter be did now, pards?"

"Thar must be somethin' did ormighty suddint-like," put in Grande George; "er they'll burn ther hull burg, an' 'skin a heap o' heads! I goes in fer a rush, chuck 'cross ther street; some of our pards layin' low, ter keep ther scum what scooted ahint ther shanties from buckin' ag'in' our backs, like ther hellyuns did afore. What d'yer say, my gentle Mustang Monarch?"

"I agree with you, pard," was the reply of Blanco Bill. "I fear Miss Jordan and the old Irishman will be in a bad fix soon, if we do not succeed in driving the red devils from the town."

"Make up your charging-party quickly, sheriff! I'm ready for biz now."

All had been engaged reloading their revolvers, while they thus spoke; and, in a moment, Alamo Abe had yelled to the "citz" who were in the adjoining shanties, to bound out into the shadows of Benzine Bazaar, and hold the savages to the west in check; while he and his pards charged across the street.

A loud cheer followed Abe's words, and those addressed yelled their agreement to the proposed plan.

Blanco Bill watched the shanty within which Katie Jordan was sheltered. To all appearances, the maiden was safe.

But a few minutes had passed since the awful sights and scenes of blood had transpired, and the "citz" had rushed to cover; and the moment they had passed from view, just after the red foe had disappeared, all became silent except the roaring of the flames from the burning cabin at the foot of the street. These cast a lurid glow afar up the rocky peaks, over and through the town, and rendered the dark sides of the thickets, bowlders, and shanties, much darker by contrast.

The silence of the Indians, after their unearthly yells and whoops, was, to those who know the ways and methods of the red-men, ominous of some new and incomprehensible danger, and caused them to be more eager to make their charge; in order, if possible, to frustrate any plan that the savages might be perfecting.

Giving a signal to those in the adjoining shanties, which was answered by a low whistle, Alamo Abe cried out:

"All set, pards! Hyer goes fer red meat! Foller ther Texas screamer!"

As the sheriff thus spoke, he sprung out into the street, Bill and George upon either side, and the six miners bounding into the line, all with revolvers in hand. Then, with a wild yell, they darted across the street, toward the opposite line of shanties; each ready to aim at the first Indian, or portion of one, that might catch his view.

Even while thus rushing onward, for aught they knew into the jaws of death, the Mustang Monarch turned his anxious gaze toward the cabin occupied by Katie and Teddy.

A fearful sight met his view!

What the young man saw, was an Apache chief, bounding toward the shanty.

This savage carried an armful of dry twigs and leaves, and in his hand a blazing torch; the red miscreant throwing the kindlings against the side of the rude dwelling, and then thrusting the torch into the same.

The instant Blanco Bill caught sight of this, he halted, and remained for a moment rigid and motionless—his comrades bounding onward without noticing his absence, for each expected, every step that he took, to be greeted by the dread war-whoop of the Apaches, and a withering volley of arrows and bullets.

By a powerful effort of will, the young Texan recovered himself, and rushed in frantic haste toward the cabin.

The Indian had darted into the dark shades of the pines, the moment he had thrust the burning torch into the dry brush and leaves.

The Mustang Monarch felt that the town was doomed. He threw himself against the door of the burning shanty, which at once flew open. At a glance, he saw that it was vacant!

Katie Jordan was gone!

He staggered into the open air.

The next moment, came the crack of a rifle, and Blanco Bill fell, senseless!

That instant two fierce Apaches sprung from the pines, with exultant yells, brandishing their long scalping-knives, and soon reaching the prostrate form of their victim. Then they both stooped, one to stab, and the other to scalp him.

But, again fire spurted from the gloomy shades—this time from two points—and the painted fiends fell, limp and dead; their horrible death-yells sounding, in a gurgling manner, and given with their last strength!

Both fell across the form of the Mustang Monarch.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

REPULSE AND RETREAT.

ALL was silent when Alamo Abe, Grande George, and their pards, reached the thickets.

"Come on, boyees!" shouted the sheriff; "ther pesky cusses hev skuted 'roun' ther burg, ter j'ine t'others an' rush in onter our pards!"

Without a moment's hesitation, all sprung upon the back trail and into the street again. It was then that they perceived the burning cabin.

"Keep on, pards!" yelled Abe; "George an' me'll see what's up yunder. Skute 'cross ther street!"

Abe bounded into the pines, followed by George. They reached the border just in time to discover the prostrate form of Blanco Bill, and the two Apaches rushing toward him.

They knew that the young Texan must have been in the cabin when they had first entered the pines. It was evident that the maiden had been captured, or he would have had her in charge.

As these thoughts flashed through their minds, both men took aim, and the sheriff cried out:

"I'll salerwate ther right han' ha'r-t'arer, George! Put yer lead inter h'art er brain!"

Both rifles belched fire, with the result already recorded. Then Alamo Abe and Grande George jerked their revolvers, and rushed toward the Mustang Monarch and their victims. Hastily examining the young man, they ascertained that the bullet fired by the Apache had not given a mortal wound—merely grazing the skull, tearing the scalp, and causing quite a flow of blood.

Twice during that night had Blanco Bill escaped death in the same manner, by scarcely more than a hair's breadth.

Having relieved their minds in regard to him, the two men ran to the burning cabin. They discovered it to be empty, and perceived that a slab in the rear had been forced outward.

That the old Irishman had succeeded in conveying his fair charge to safety, Abe and George felt positive; as, in the event of the Indians having seized them, the usual yells would have been heard from the reds.

Greatly relieved, they hastened back to the front of the shanty.

To their consternation, their friend, whom they had left there unconscious, was not to be seen.

Blanco Bill and the two dead Apaches were gone!

They halted, and gazed around them in wonder.

No longer were any sounds of strife to be heard down the street.

Here was a mystery indeed!

Where were the Apaches?

Our two friends at once decided that the savages had given up the fight, and had stolen around the town, gaining the pines; when, observing their fallen comrades and the young white man, they had secured all three and darted into the thickets. They would doubtless be satisfied at having obtained a captive for the torture, slain some half a dozen of the miners, and fired the town.

The disappointed "citz" now gathered around Benzine Bazaar, but the scout and the sheriff sprung into and through the pines, catching a glimpse of the last of the Indians as they hastened toward their mustangs.

Grande George instantly drew bead and blazed away.

A mounted brave, with a death-yell, threw his arms wildly in the air, and sunk back over the hams of his horse.

This warned the Apaches that they had been discovered, and were being pursued.

Then, as an echo to the death cry of the savage, came a piercing shriek.

It proceeded from female lips—from Katie Jordan!

With clinched teeth and determined faces, the two men bounded forward, firing a perfect fusillade ahead. This was for the purpose of frightening the Indians, and preventing them from making a search for the young girl. They were satisfied that Katie was not a captive, but that she had been concealed somewhere by Teddy, and that the cry they had heard had been occasioned by her having discovered Blanco Bill, as he was being borne away by his captors.

Soon Abe and George gained the point whence the shriek had proceeded, when they caught a view of the savages speeding southward, with two white men as captives.

One was evidently the Mustang Monarch. But who was the other?

They were positive that he must be a stranger; for, had the Apaches captured one of the miners since they had parted from them, Abe and George felt sure there would have been a commotion and a fight. It was not reasonable to suppose that one of the "citz" had ventured away from the main party alone.

Before reaching the thicket, in which our friends felt certain they would find Katie Jordan, wild yells sounded from the crowd of miners, who had discovered the retreating Indians. They had lost six of their men, and the reds were now bearing away two more as captives; one of these being Blanco Bill, without doubt.

A hasty investigation proved that no other man was missing, except those who lay mangled and dead.

This was strange and mysterious, for they could see, at a glance, that the second captive was neither Grande George nor Alamo Abe.

They all made a rush for the retreating Indians. But this was folly, as the latter were mounted. A signal yell from Abe, however, caused them to cheer, and bound toward the spot whence it had proceeded.

In a few moments, they had all met on the border of the thicket.

The miners had heard the cry of Katie, and the shots of the scout and sheriff, but they had not hastened to the assistance of their leaders, for the reason that they discovered the Indians some distance from the point whence the reports had proceeded.

At the moment the "citz," scout, and sheriff, reached the border of the pines, Teddy McCarthy rushed out, bearing in his arms the senseless form of his young mistress.

The old man gave no time for questions. Indeed, every one was speechless at the sight of the pale and unconscious maiden; all bearing in mind the horror and sufferings through which she had passed, that eventful night.

All were filled with the deepest sympathy and pity, and with a desire to avenge her great wrongs, and the outrages that had been committed upon the town and its people, by the pirates of the plains.

"Thank the good Lord, ye're here at last, gintlemin!" exclaimed Teddy. "But don't yees be afther frettin' fer Miss Katie. She'll be all right, afther a bit. She's just fainted, an' no wonder, fer yonder goes the red divils wid Mither Blanco Bill and her own brother, Patsey Jordan! Faith, an' he was a broth of a boy, that same!"

"Where in the divil did the red spalpeens be afther findin' Patsey, whin meself an' Katie had hunted fer him high an' low? It bates the Ould Boy entirely!"

"For the pure love o' God, gintlemin, try an' get Patsey and Mither Bill from the red divils! Sure, me ould heart's afther bein' ready till break, I'm that grieved fer Miss Katie!"

The old Irishman rattled these words off rapidly, still clasping the senseless young girl in his arms.

The entire party were astonished at what Teddy had told them.

"Dog-gone my Texas heart, boyees, but this air speedin' hellishness onter ther angel o' Last Lay-out a ormighty sight too thick! Now hear me, Alermo Abe! I sw'ar that ther Mustang Monarch hev gut ter be reskied, an' ther leetle gal's brother, too, ef I hes ter wade through bleed, an' foller them ter the Pecos."

"I can't stan' this racket no longer. I'm sheriff o' this hyer burg, an' I wants yer all ter foller me, jest a-humpin'!"

"We'll save ther festive Monarch an' Patsey Jordan, too, boyees, er die a-tryin'," said the scout. "Ef we-uns can't scoop in thet leetle party o' sculpers, I'll eat snakes fer grub fer a month o' Sundays!"

"Teddy, you jist lay low in a shanty till we roves back. Thar won't no more on 'em catch fire, I reckon. Boyees, we'll scoot fer ther herd o' nags we corraled at ther gulch, an' then everlastin'ly hump ourselves on the trail, fer we've gut ter do it lively. Bloody biz an' cyclone speed air the words!"

A rousing cheer burst from the miners, and all sped headlong after Abe and George.

"Howly Mary guard yees!" cried old

Teddy, as he gazed after them. But sure, I'm thankful we're afther findin' Patsey at last, even if he is in the clutches o' thim red devils. I'm hoping that the boys will bring him and Misther Blanco Bill back safe, an' thin it's meself that'll be es happy as Biddy Murphy's pig!"

Closing his soliloquy, the Irishman proceeded toward the street, pointing for Benzine Bazaar. He avoided the mangled corpses on his way, and soon had procured some brandy from Alamo Abe, and began bathing Katie's head, having indulged in a few swallows of the liquor on his own account.

At length the maiden came back to consciousness, but when she fully recalled the near past her fair face was too agonizing to look upon. Teddy was so impressed that his tongue refused utterance when he strove to give the explanations, which he felt sure would relieve in a measure her tortured brain.

However, when he did find voice, and Katie at length knew that what she had half-believed a dream was actually true, the poor girl was greatly excited. At last she became composed, and indeed thankful, when Teddy informed her that Blanco Bill had not been killed, but only stunned by a glancing bullet.

We need not dwell upon the long hours of anguish, anxiety, and impatience, suffered by both Teddy and Katie in Benzine Bazaar; as they awaited some news from those for whose safety they prayed. The hours of watching and waiting extended into the following day, when the bright sun shone down upon the hot cinders and embers; all that remained of four of the cabins of Last Lay-out—the absence of any breeze having saved the town from total destruction.

The sun shone down also upon the mutilated dead in the street; a sight that Katie avoided, she keeping in the gaming portion of the "Bazaar," her hands clasped before her, as she paced back and forth over the plank floor.

Teddy McCarthy, utterly prostrated, slept upon a table; "Texas," the burro, standing beside the same, its nose and its hanging ears touching the floor. The poor little animal was also sleeping off the effects of the night's "circusing."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

COMPANIONS IN MISERY.

WE left Patsey Jordan, bound to his horse, a torturing gag preventing him from making the least sound except a hoarse gasping.

No torture more harrowing to the heart and soul could be conceived.

The young man was confident that his sister was in the cabin near him, and that Teddy had sprung in to defend the dwelling against the attacks of the Indians.

Patsey was scarcely surprised at Katie's presence. He knew that she was just the girl to undertake such an expedition. It was just like her, thus to brave danger and death for him. His feelings, therefore, may be imagined.

In fact, he was in an agony of mind, that was terrible to endure.

Yet, he was helpless, and must endure it.

At times, he could hear the stealthy movements of human beings amid the pines, and he would shoot keen glances all around the shades, but he could see no one.

Time passed—oh, so heavily, so miserably!—to Patsey Jordan.

His mind was in a most unnatural state, his brain disordered, and no wonder.

Strange scenes and fancies flitted before him, until he could hardly believe that he had heard the voice of Teddy, much less had beheld the well-known form of his old friend.

Yet the words rung in his ears, and the picture of the old man was stamped upon his mind.

He did not believe that it was possible for him to suffer more excruciating mental torture than was his at that moment, but he was soon to be undeceived; for, ere long, he beheld the Apache place the brush against the cabin, and set fire to it.

This was horrible!

The savage had sprung instantly to covert, doubtless awaiting to shoot down any who might emerge from the doomed shanty.

When, a little later, Patsey perceived the young Texan dart into the burning cabin,

only to return unsuccessful, his agony was increased.

Both Katie and Teddy must be in the hands of the Apaches!

This was the inevitable conclusion of the captive, and then he saw his sister's would-be rescuer fall to the earth, apparently dead, and two braves spring forward to scalp and mutilate the prostrate man.

But again he was relieved.

It seemed that the Fates, good and bad, were playing a close game, each winning alternately; for two sharp reports sounded almost as one, and both the Indians fell to the earth, uttering dismal death-howls.

So intent had Patsey been upon the scene before the burning cabin, that he had not heard the rustling of bush and branch, made within a few feet of him by Alamo Abe and Grande George; but, as he realized that the two Apaches were beyond all power of doing harm, he turned his attention to the point whence the rifles had been fired.

Then he heard the movements and voices of white men. He trembled from head to foot, and exerted his powers to cry out, but without avail. He saw two white men advance into the street, and saw them examine the wounds of the prostrate young man.

The watcher knew, by the manner of the pair, that the young Texan was not seriously wounded. He next saw the scout and the sheriff enter the blazing shanty, and emerge from the rear. But at the same time, he perceived several hideous braves dash from the pines, catch up their two slain comrades and the insensible Texan, and bear them all into the dense shades. The entire party then hurried south.

Soon mustangs were reached, and all mounted, the dead being bound across empty saddles, as was also the limp form of the insensible stranger. A low signal followed, and the mustangs were urged along in retreat.

Patsey felt that he was doomed.

It was when this conviction was forced upon him that he heard a shriek, which he knew must have proceeded from Katie. The sound guided his eyes, and he saw, amid the foliage, his sister in the arms of the faithful old Teddy.

How the young man thanked God that the red fiends were forced to hurry onward, and that they dared not halt!

He began also to have hope, for he knew that the shots from the rear had been fired to prevent the Apaches from halting. Had this not been the case, the whites would have aimed low and killed many.

It also indicated that those in the rear were aware that the Indians had captives, and were bent on rescuing them.

This hope was somewhat dissipated, however, as the red demons sped from the vicinity of Last Lay-out, down the range, and Patsey saw no signs of pursuit. But a hasty inspection of his captors and their mustangs served to relieve his mind; for the animals were gaunt and hollow, and covered with dry foam, being evidently unable to make a long run. The Apaches, themselves, seemed greatly frightened, and several of them were wounded.

Upon second thoughts, Patsey Jordan felt he had not much ground for hope of life; for he knew the nature of these demons of the Pecos well enough to be confident, that if a rescue was attempted, except by stealth and strategy, he and the stranger would at once be butchered.

Just then a heavy groan came from the wounded man, and a moment after he struggled, clutching the mane of the mustang, and drawing his head and shoulders upward from the painful position which he occupied.

Instantly two braves rode up beside the animal upon which Blanco Bill was bound, one on each side, and grasping him roughly placed him in a natural position; after cutting the lariat that had secured him when he had hung limp over the saddle. They then tied a portion of the rope about his waist, the ends being wound around the horn of the saddle and made fast. His arms were then secured behind him.

Blanco Bill was utterly dazed, his brain being still to a certain extent benumbed, by the bullet having struck his skull.

Blood flowed freely through his hair, and over his handsome face; the hemorrhage being caused by the unnatural position he had

been compelled to maintain, hanging over the saddle when insensible.

Bill gazed wildly about, and around him, and up at the dark towering peaks.

The Indians hurried onward.

They had no time apparently to gag their prisoner, or else they did not think it necessary.

Many among them knew that he was the same man that had been secured to the stake, by the outlaws under Capitan Christobal, at the gulch; and they believed that he had made his escape, and brought the citizens of Last Lay-out down upon them, causing wholesale death among their number.

Those of the horse guard, who knew nothing of the affairs which had occurred at the gulch, were informed of this; consequently, the most deadly hatred flashed every black eye into the face of Blanco Bill, but he heeded them not.

Dauntless and unconcerned, as far as expression went, on he rode.

But soon he caught sight of his fellow-captive.

The eyes of Bill and Patsey met.

Did the former see something in gaze or face, that brought to mind his darling Katie? So it seemed, for his glance was filled with brotherly regard and sympathy.

Besides this, it brought back to the mind of the Mustang Monarch most vividly all that recently occurred.

But, upon reflection, Bill felt relieved.

Katie and Teddy must have left the cabin of their own accord, and secretly. They must then be hidden in a thicket or among the howlders.

If they had been captured, they would have been brought along by the reds.

Most certainly the young girl would not have been slain; and, had Teddy been killed, she would be included with this stranger and himself as captives.

Blanco Bill was confident that the party now surrounding him was all that remained of the Apaches.

From the fact that Alamo Abe and Grande George, with the miners, had not encountered the Indians after he had left them to hasten to Katie's rescue, the young Texan decided that the savages were weak in numbers.

He felt a most extraordinary interest in this fellow-captive of his, for which he could not account.

Patsey, too, was filled with admiration for his comrade in misfortune.

The young men read each other like a book. The sun was now peeping above the horizon, and the dread night, so full of horrible happenings, was gone at last.

What the consequences of those occurrences would be, as far as they were concerned, neither Bill nor Patsey dared speculate upon.

Yet both tried to feel hopeful.

Blanco Bill resolved to escape, but he was also as firmly resolved that he would not escape until he had freed his fellow-captive.

He vowed, also, that the red fiends should, many of them, "claw dirt" in the death-agony before he parted with them.

The decision of Patsey Jordan, as before mentioned in connection with the worn and broken condition of the mustangs of his captors, proved true, for the animals could not be forced by quirt or knife further than five miles down the range from Last Lay-out.

There, entering a wild and narrow gulch, the Apaches encamped, leaving at the entrance a guard of two braves.

The captives were roughly jerked from their horses and secured to trees. The mustangs, after taking a roll, cropped the wiry grass with avidity. The Indians threw themselves upon the ground, and began devouring dried meat like famished wolves.

The gag was removed from the mouth of Patsey, and then in low voices the two young men began to converse.

The joy of Blanco Bill was great upon learning from his fellow-captive that he was the brother of Katie Jordan—that the lost was found, although a captive!

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE RESCUE.

WHEN Alamo Abe, Grande George and the band of "citz" rushed toward the border of the thickets, it was with the hope that the miners who had been left to guard the

herd of captured horses, had allowed the animals to graze up the range.

Their relief was great upon breaking free from the rocks and trees to perceive the herd within a few yards of them.

The animals that had formerly belonged to the outlaw band of Capitan Christobal had the saddles still upon them, although the girths had been loosened and the bridles removed.

A sufficient number of these were speedily bridled and our friends mounted, the horse-guard being directed to drive the remaining beasts through the town, and into the gulch beyond, where there was good grazing.

After these directions had been given by Alamo Abe, the detachment hastened down the range, keeping on the outside of all obstructions, such as thickets, trees and boulders, which served to screen them from the view of the Apaches, while the soft grass of the border of the plain caused it to be impossible for the sounds of the horses' hoofs to be heard by any one fifty yards distant, unless stationed specially to watch for, and expecting their presence.

The bright sun arose soon after our friends started, and then George and Abe sprang from their steeds, passed the bridle-reins to two of the miners, and ordering the cavalcade to proceed, the pair hastened in amid the boulders and thickets, until they found the trail of the red foe. Then, with senses strained, and on the alert, they went on in a dog-trot, keeping on the trail easily, as the same was plainly defined, by the night-dew being brushed from the grass by the hoofs of the mustangs.

At length they crawled, snake-like, as they discovered the narrow entrance to the gulch, in which they felt sure the Indians had taken refuge. Soon they peeped from a thicket and saw one of the Apaches placidly smoking, the scent of the burning tobacco having acted as guide, and warned them to be cautious.

Pretty soon they heard guttural sounds, and knew there were at least two savages at the entrance of the break in the rocky range.

Alamo Abe then made his way to the border of the plain, and ordered the cavalcade to halt and await further developments. When he rejoined the scout the two decided that the sentinels must die.

This was a difficult undertaking, but it was imperative, for they knew not how far inside the savages and their captives were, but judged some little distance.

It was impossible to scale the mountain-side at that point, and then pass along and descend the gulch wall; consequently, the only chance or hope of rescue was to enter boldly. This could not be done until the sentinels were slain.

Having thus decided, there was no delay.

Alamo Abe and Grande George, with bow-ies between their teeth, crawled toward the entrance of the gulch, having agreed upon a signal at the sound of which from George's lips both were to bound upon and slay each his sentinel. Should there prove to be more than two, they had agreed to cautiously return and arrange other plans.

Full five minutes had elapsed after the parting of the two men, before they made the discoveries they sought. A hasty glance proved to both of them, that there were but two reds to dispose of; and, not only this, but that it would be almost impossible to pounce down upon them, owing to the obstructions in their path.

But the fertile brain of the scout had already devised a mode of action. He selected a stone, some thirty pounds in weight, and held it up before Abe, with a suggestive grimace and movement.

This was understood instantly, and the sheriff followed suit.

The sentinels were facing the entrance to the gulch, and thought not of danger from above. The two men, therefore, had the game in their own hands. Holding the heavy pieces of rock above their heads, they glanced significantly into each other's eyes; then, regaining their aim, both at the same time hurled the huge stones directly upon the heads of the unsuspecting Apaches.

Abe and George then gazed, with intense anxiety, downward.

Both sentinels lay, quivering in the death-agony, their skulls crushed in like broken

egg-shells, and their brains spattered over the rocks; neither of them having been able to utter a sound. No less anxiously did the two friends gaze up the gulch, and listen, fearing the noise caused by the fall of the masses of rock, had been heard by the main portion of the war-party. But there was no indication of this.

"Quick, Abel! Run for the boycees!" ordered George, in a guarded voice, as he jerked his revolvers, and sprang down beside the dead savages.

"I'll stan' guard, ontill yer fetch 'em. Tie ther nags, an' guide all hands byer, lively!"

Alamo Abe hesitated not an instant, and soon returned with the miners at his heels; but all, as they neared the entrance of the gulch, stole forward cautiously, with revolvers in hand.

Posting half-a-dozen men to guard the entrance, George and Abe stole forward, and soon saw that the gulch grew wider as they went on. This decided them to keep close together.

In a very short time, a view was gained of the mustangs of the Indians, the animals grazing in the middle of the gulch, at a point where the same was full fifty yards in width. Here the scout flung his sombrero into the clear bed of the ravine, and the pair proceeded.

As yet they had discovered none of the war-party; but, not far had they gone, when upon turning a curve in the wall, a scene was presented to their view, that gave them grounds for hope.

This was the two captives, bound to trees at the base of the gulch wall, while nine Apaches were stretched out in recumbent positions, smoking "shack" cigarettes, some little distance from Blanco Bill and Patsey Jordan.

The two men saw at once that it would be possible for them to gain a point sufficiently near the captives, to enable them to rush between the latter and the Indians, and prevent the red fiends from butchering their prisoners, while, as this was accomplished, the miners, at a signal, could dash upon, and annihilate the savages to a man.

This plan had to be carried out at once.

In great suspense Abe and George awaited the coming of the miners.

It seemed to them an age before the expected aid arrived, and when the reckless man from Last Lay-out did steal forward, not a moment was lost. The scout and sheriff made known to them the signal that would be given for instant assault. Then both stole on.

Five minutes after the Indians sprang to their feet, all gazing in alarm toward their captives.

Both these latter, their bonds severed, sat at the foot of the trees to which they had been bound, while between them and their red captors stood, with extended revolvers in each hand, Grande George and Alamo Abe.

Then came the horrible war-cry of the Apaches, as, clutching their weapons, they rushed upon the two daring rescuers, not imagining for a moment that other enemies were within their stronghold.

A piercing whistle from the brave pair and then, out from the bushes at the base of the gulch wall, bounded the miners.

It was no fight.

It was simply a massacre.

In a few moments every Apache lay dead!

Then the welcome news was imparted to Bill and Patsey that Katie and Teddy were safe and sound in Last Lay-out.

Most hearty were the thanks and congratulations that followed.

As may be supposed, the rescuers lost no time in hastening to relieve the maiden and her faithful old protector, from the anguish and anxiety caused by their uncertainty as to the fate of Blanco Bill and Patsey.

Who could find words to express the extravagant joy and happiness that reigned in the burg, when those, so sadly separated, met in Benzine Bazaar? The building fairly quivered with the whoops and yells of the "citz," who went fairly wild with boisterous jubilation over the marvelous luck, and the honor that had come upon them and their town, through the arrival of the Mustang Monarch and Katie Jordan, the previous evening.

During that eventful night a band of outlaw Greasers and Texans, and a war-party

of Apaches, had been annihilated, to the last man; and brave and brilliant deeds had crowned each hour, while the most beautiful maiden of the range was honoring the burg with her angelic presence. Alamo Abe declaring her to be "ther Angel o' Last Lay-out, an' ther hull Rockies."

Abe had good cause to congratulate himself upon having been elected sheriff at the most opportune moment—indeed, at the very time of all times for his success and honor—for the future was assured, through the strange and startling occurrences of the past few hours. And that, although he had set out by bringing to an end, in so humiliating a manner, his maiden speech.

But, notwithstanding the good cause for such jubilation and celebration of victories won and objects gained, each was considerate of the other, and all agreed that the remainder of the day, and the night to come, could not be so well improved as by rest and sleep; for all needed to recover from the privations they had passed, and the herculean exertions and continuous action they had been forced to maintain.

Quarters were furnished for Katie Jordan and her brother—the latter relating his wandering history to his sister, Blanco Bill, Teddy McCarthy and Grande George.

Katie also gave Patsey an account of their home, and of her search for him, in which Teddy had so faithfully accompanied her.

Food was provided, and Alamo Abe dispensed free whisky at Benzine Bazaar to all, not forgetting his own needs, and making up for what he considered "lost time."

A few hours were passed in this way, and then Last Lay-out became again silent, all reposing in deathlike slumber and fearing not that they would again be molested.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WELL WORTH THE STRUGGLE.

WE have little more to relate, in connection with Last Lay-out, or the leading characters whom we have introduced.

The whole town seemed to share in the emotions of the rescued ones; even "Texas," the burro, went wildly up and down the street, squealing in the most insane glee. "Calico," Katie's horse, was found near the base of the range, and manifested much delight at being again petted by his young mistress.

But, best of all the recoveries of property, were the horses of the pards of Patsey Jordan who had been killed by the Apaches. These animals, after stampeding over the plain, eventually sought the town; drawn there by instinct, to join their kind. A large fortune in gold was found in the saddle-bags, which had been securely bound to the cantles by their owners.

Patsey had his gold all safe on his own horse, to which the Indians had bound him, and he readily agreed to return home with Katie.

Blanco Bill was also induced to form one of the party, although all three resolved that they would return to Last Lay-out at no distant day, as Bill felt persuaded that much hidden riches lay in that vicinity.

The gold of the murdered miners was given, part of it to those whose cabins had been burned, and the remainder sent, by Patsey Jordan, to the nearest relatives of the slain.

But, to make a mere mention, as we would fain avoid taxing the patience of the reader, we will briefly state that our four friends went back to the "States" together: having received a rousing "send-off" from the "citz" of Last Lay-out, who were filled with regret and sorrow at losing them, but hopeful of their return.

The love that had sprung up in so short a time in the hearts of Bill and Katie culminated in marriage, the wedding being a grand affair, and taking place shortly after the arrival at the old home in Scranton. Patsey was welcomed, as one from the dead, and many were the praises that were showered upon Katie for her sisterly devotion, bravery and endurance.

Teddy McCarthy filled the ears of those who listened to his marvelous tales with astonishment, and no wonder, for he never forgot to relate how he had saved Katie from death by having "fid his gun" double rations of powder, which had caused the wea-

pon to kill at one end and knock senseless at the other.

From the fact that "Texas" had saved Last Lay-out and all the "citz" from destruction and death by his timely squeal, Teddy and Katie, upon learning the desire of the miners, formally presented the little donkey to the town; Alamo Abe being constituted its guardian.

Not long, however, were Blanco Bill and Patsey Jordan contented to remain in the "States." With Katie and old Teddy, they returned, with the intention of establishing an extensive ranch. And great was the rejoicing at Last Lay-out when they arrived, the town having increased to four times its former size and population since our friends had left it, there having been some quite extensive and showy buildings erected.

Young Jordan and his brother-in-law, Williamson, entered into partnership in two distinct lines of business, namely: a hotel in the town, and a large ranch on a creek some ten miles from the range—the former to "run" the hotel, and the latter the ranch, where he could devote himself to the pet theory and practice of his life.

The gulch where Patsey and his unfortunate pards had found the gold was visited by the two young men, and a large amount in pure nuggets and pellets was found, which, with what Patsey had first "scooped in," placed him among the leading men of wealth in New Mexico. And not only he, but Blanco Bill, as well.

Grande George became the superintendent of the ranch of "ther festive Mustang Monarch," as he always persisted in designating Mr. Williamson; while Teddy McCarthy always took care that everything was shipshape around the dwelling and corrals.

Blanco Bill, after his marriage, at the request of his wife, promised to deny himself the pleasure of subduing any wild horses except such as were his own—dropping, as far as he could do so, the cognomens which he had borne, through his old vocation.

Happy, indeed, were they all; George and old Teddy becoming eventually quite wealthy, as Bill insisted upon their receiving a percentage of the increase in stock.

Patsey Jordan met his fate on the occasion of a visit to Denver, the year following his return to New Mexico, and a good, as well as beautiful wife he luckily secured. This enabled him to dispense with a hired housekeeper at his hotel, in the management of which establishment, he was remarkably successful.

Thus we leave them all, prosperous and happy, glad to close, in this way, our narrative of Katie Jordan's faithful, sisterly affection, of the disastrous expedition of Capitan Christobal, in search of his hated rival, and of the equally disastrous raid of the Apache war-party, led by Red Deer; of the "citz" of Last Lay-out, and of the successful, and indeed providential, trip to New Mexico and the Rockies, of William Williamson, *alias* Blanco Bill, the Boss Buccaro, or

MUSTANG MONARCH.

THE END.

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